

GREYCLOUD HEROINES



HARRIET PINE GROUP



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"Get a canoe, Hiliary!" called Cathalina as she dived from the point in hope of catching Isabel in time.
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(Greycliff Heroines)

GREYCLIFF HEROINES

BY HARRIET PYNE GROVE

Author of

"Cathalina at Greycliff," "The Girls of Greycliff,"
"The Greycliff Girls in Camp," "Greycliff Wings,"



A. L. BURT COMPANY

Publishers

New York

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THE GREYCLIFF GIRLS SERIES

A Series of Stories for Girls
By HARRIET PYNE GROVE

CATHALINA AT GREYCLIFF
THE GIRLS OF GREYCLIFF
THE GREYCLIFF GIRLS IN CAMP
GREYCLIFF HEROINES
GREYCLIFF WINGS

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GREYCLIFF HEROINES

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JUL 17 '23

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GREYCLIFF HEROINES

CHAPTER I

GUESTS ON THE WAY

A BLUE-EYED, sunburned, slight young man leaped from a boat to the floating dock at Bath, Maine, and reached back for baggage handed him by two red-faced boys who were evidently most uncomfortable at being once more dressed in the garb of civilization. One of them pulled at his collar, and moved his head uneasily, as he balanced on the edge of the little launch, and then sprang out with a whoop which was the vent for his suppressed spirits.

“So long, boys,” said the two, in farewell to two others who remained in the boat.

“So long.”

“Goodbye, Mr. Stuart.”

“Goodbye, boys.”

The launch chugged away up the river toward Boothbay Camp, and the tall young camp councillor, with the two boys and their luggage, as well as his

own, started up the slight rise toward the main street of the quaint New England town.

At the same time, an attractive, well-dressed lady, apparently under middle age, was walking briskly in the direction of this little street which led to the dock, and just before starting to cross it she saw the party of three coming toward her. Whereupon she waited, smiling a little.

“Well met, Campbell Stuart,” said she.

In pleased surprise, the young councillor stopped and held out his hand. “So here you are, Auntie! I was wondering when you would get here! All alone? Too early for the girls, I guess. I didn’t see anything of the boats from Merrymeeting Camp as we came down the river. However, that is no sign that they aren’t coming in shortly. I have to take these kids to the station up here and see that they make their train. Where shall I meet you and the girls?”

“I just came in on the train from Portland, and we forgot to arrange by letter just where to meet. So I think I’d better go down to the dock, don’t you?”

“It isn’t much of a place for you to stay, Aunt Sylvia, but I’ll be back soon, and you will be sure to catch the girls there. Where’s the car?—and Phil?”

“In Boston,” replied Mrs. Van Buskirk with a comical look. “I’ll tell you all about it later. Are

these some of the young gentlemen from the boys' camp?"

The boys, who had been standing aside, though listening with interest to the conversation, were introduced and soon hurried off, while Mrs. Van Buskirk went down to the dock, to which she had been directed, and sat down on a long bench there, with people who were waiting for some boat. Presently she saw the boats from Merrymeeting Girls' Camp, which she recognized because of their load of happy girls, and walked across the muddy driveway toward the floating dock, where she saw that they were about to land. Her first glimpse of her daughter Cathalina came when the girls began to disentangle themselves from mass formation, and Cathalina jumped out, shaking out the wrinkles in her dress and tucking back wisps of hair which had been blown about by the Kennebec breezes.

"I don't know where we shall find Mother," Cathalina was saying, as Hilary and June Lancaster, Betty Barnes and Lilian North joined her, "but we can walk on up and look for the car. We forgot to appoint the spot." Just then she saw her mother. "Why, Mothery! How nice of you to come down to meet us! Where's Phil? Here are the rest of us."

Mrs. Van Buskirk warmly greeted each girl and they turned away from the river to join the scattering girls, who made quite a procession up the short street.

"We have to see June off, you know, Mother," explained Cathalina. "She goes straight through with the girls and councillors of that crowd. A good many of our friends are leaving. Do you care if we go?"

"Not at all. Where shall we meet?"

"You couldn't take us to the station?"

"The car isn't here, dear; it is in Boston."

"Mercy! What shall we do!" exclaimed Cathalina.

"I have a good plan." Cathalina and her mother were walking together and the rest of their group followed. "Do you think that they would enjoy going by boat to Boston?—at my expense, of course."

Cathalina hesitated a moment. "Why, I imagine they'd like it. But why the change?"

"Your father could get away, he found, and we have been up in the White Mountains for a week and more. Then he went back and I came on to Portland for a few days. Philip was delayed until your father returned to New York. The chauffeur was to have the car and Philip in Boston either to-day or tomorrow, and I arrived at Bath about an hour ago—at your service, my daughter!"

Cathalina laughed. "I see. Our house party is to begin on a boat. You are a dear and a darling. Do you mind coming with us to the station? I'd like to have you meet some of the girls. Frances Anderson and Marion Thurman we may not see for

a long time. They do not go to Greycliff, you know."

"Very well. Campbell just went to the station with two sunburned boys from camp. I met him as I was coming to the dock. By the way, your own complexions are of the stylish summer type."

"Oh, yes! We're always in the state of being either red, blistered or brown. The girls with black hair are the only ones that show any contrast."

At the station Mrs. Van Buskirk was highly entertained. It had been a long time since she had seen so many girls abroad together. There were eager last messages, goodbyes, clusters of happy, laughing girls, and finally the moving train, bright faces in windows and waving hands. Campbell had joined the party, and after the train left they returned to seats in the station while the matter of getting to Boston was under consideration. Mrs. Van Buskirk explained the change of plan as she had to Cathalina, to find the young people quite pleased with the idea of the boat trip to Boston.

"The boat does not leave till somewhere around seven o'clock," said Campbell. "I'll find out the exact time. We can have lunch at the Colonial on the way down. I don't know what sort of accommodations we shall be able to get."

"That's so," said Cathalina. "There are two parties from our camp taking the trip to Boston, New York and Washington."

"I took it for granted," said Mrs. Van Buskirk, "that we'd go by boat, and telegraphed from Portland for reservations."

"I might have known," said Cathalina, with relief, knowing, too, that the reservations would include the best staterooms on the steamer.

They left the station, Campbell, with courtesy, accompanying his aunt; but Mrs. Van Buskirk said that she must talk to Cathalina about several matters and thus changed the order of march. Betty and Lilian purposely fell in together, leaving Hilary free for Campbell.

"This house party," said Campbell, "is one fine plan of Aunt Sylvia's."

"I guess Cathalina thought it up, didn't she?" replied Hilary.

"Yes, but it takes Aunt Sylvia to give people the time of their lives!"

"She is too lovely for words," assented Hilary. "I'll never forget my other visit in New York. And she doesn't seem to be making any effort, either."

"She makes kind plans and is fortunate in having the means to carry them out. But I believe that her house is really the center of operations for our whole clan, the 'sisters and cousins and aunts,' as you said."

"Shall we see the relatives this time?"

"Ann Maria's home, I believe, and the Van Nesses. But you are not to spend too much time with any of them. *I'm* going to show you New York!"

"O, indeed!" laughed Hilary. "That sounds interesting. It will seem different from the wintry days I spent there and will be another new experience."

At the Colonial they decided to make their meal a dinner at Cathalina's suggestion, "so we won't have to bother with it on the boat. I want some beefsteak with French fried potatoes—let's see!"

"O, Cathalina," said Hilary, "just ordinary beefsteak with all these seafood things? I want some sort of a clam broth and some shrimp salad, and I must have a last New England doughnut—"

There was plenty of quiet fun at that last meal in little Bath. Mrs. Van Buskirk enjoyed it as much as any of them. Then they strolled down to the dock to which the City of Rockland would come. "How many times at camp, girls," said Lilian, "have we heard that old boat salute us—three long 'toots'!"

"I've never been on the real ocean before," said Hilary.

"Neither have I," said Betty.

"We have good weather," said Mrs. Van Buskirk, "and it will be moonlight."

Moonlight it was, as they all sat well forward on the deck to watch the moon, the clouds, and the shores of the Kennebec. Then at last they reached the ocean. Hilary caught her breath a little as they first felt the ocean swell, but it was calm "on the deep," and the ship fairly steady.

"Are you all right?" Campbell inquired with concern, as he drew up his chair next to Hilary.

"O, yes. I felt a little funny at first, but I love it!"

There was much to tell Mrs. Van Buskirk. Campbell told the most amusing tales of doings at the boys' camp and the girls described the grand finale of the last week in Merrymeeting Camp, the banquet, the prizes, the last trips and fun, which had not been included in any of Cathalina's letters home.

"Probably your last letter is waiting for me at home, Cathalina," said Mrs. Van Buskirk. "When I left Boston for this little trip with your father I left word for the mail to be forwarded to New York. Our visit to the White Mountains was unexpected, you know, but Mr. Van Buskirk needed a cooler place to rest than Boston. Your Aunt Ann, Cathalina, was so disappointed, but it couldn't be helped, and I had been there long enough anyway. By the way, what do you girls want to see in Boston?"

"Speak up, Hilary," said Cathalina, smiling, as there was a slight hesitation on the part of the girls addressed.

"Oh, your mother will know where we ought to go. Of course I'd like to see the Bunker Hill Monument, and the place where the Boston Tea Party was, and if it isn't too much trouble to drive there, Lexington and Concord—and the Harvard buildings are in Cambridge, aren't they? And, Oh, I do

want to see the place where Miss Alcott wrote 'Little Women'!"

"You have chosen well, Hilary. Of course we shall drive out through Cambridge, Lexington and Concord. I think that I shall rest in the hotel in the morning and let the boys take you girls around the city. But after lunch we shall start early, and I believe I can tell you many interesting things about the different places. Nearly everything is historic or has literary associations. I love Concord myself, Hilary, and the Alcott home will delight you girls."

It was late, indeed, when the party sought their staterooms. Mrs. Van Buskirk had one to herself, and had arranged for Cathalina and Betty to be together, Hilary and Lillian next door.

"My, this is different from the lake trip, isn't it?" Betty commented, as the boat rolled about a little and she occasionally took hold of something to steady herself.

"Does it make you feel sick?"

"Not a bit, just funny."

But both the girls, their chaperone, and the contented Campbell were soon in deepest slumber till time to rise and watch the boat come in to Boston Harbor.

"I do hope that Phil will be there!" said Cathalina.

"If he is not," said Mrs. Van Buskirk, "we shall not waste any time. He knows the hotel at which I shall stop, and if our own car has not arrived we can

take a taxi around the city, and, indeed, one of the motor trips out to Lexington and Concord."

"But you wouldn't get your rest, Mrs. Van Buskirk," said Lilian.

"I was tired yesterday, but I believe that I shall go with you this morning anyway. It is going to be a fine day to drive. We shall see. I must get in a little time to take you all around to Aunt Ann's, for she would be heart-broken if Cathalina and Phil were here and she did not see them."

Mrs. Van Buskirk believed in having plans ready for any emergency, but Philip, to whom one of his mother's telegrams had gone, was not only in the city, but at the dock with the car. This he left with the chauffeur, while he chose a place of vantage to see the people come off the boat, for Philip Van Buskirk was not going to miss any of this visit with Lilian North.

"Oh, there's Philip now, Mothery," exclaimed Cathalina, as Mrs. Van Buskirk and the girls, following the crowd which was crossing the gangplank, reached the outer air and made ready to cross. Lilian had seen him, but made no comment as she caught a welcoming glance from Philip's dark eyes.

It was no time at all before they were leaning back on comfortable cushions in a luxurious car, while Philip and Mrs. Van Buskirk conferred a little with the chauffeur, who touched his cap and departed.

"Boston is the home of our chauffeur," explained

Mrs. Van Buskirk to the girls as Philip helped her into the machine. "He is to have a short vacation while Philip and Campbell drive us home."

Philip Van Buskirk and Campbell Stuart were of about the same height, tall, slight and active, but of contrasting complexions, though Philip's skin was clear and smooth.

"Phil is the handsomest," thought Lilian, as she looked at the two boys in front, and she regretted her own present complexion, rather sunburned from the camp experience, though not as bad as Cathalina had extravagantly indicated. For Lilian was recalling a remark of Philip's, in the pine grove at camp, when he looked at her admiringly while he said something about liking "golden-haired, blue-eyed, lovely-faced girls."

At the same time, Hilary of the dark brown locks was admiring Campbell's fairness and contrasting him favorably with the graceful, stylish Philip. Both youths had the square shoulders and fine carriage which their early years at the military school in the South had given them.

Cathalina, whose spiritual face and dreamy, sky-blue eyes had not changed much in spite of the practical experiences of the last two years, was thinking, "I'll soon be in New York," and visualized a call from a strong, well-built young officer with sunny brown hair about the shade of her own, a wave in

one front lock, deep-set brown eyes, and a serious, kind face.

Betty, whose coloring was like Cathalina's, but on whose rounder face two dimples chased in and out, was not thinking at all of any young man, but of Boston and the sights she was to see immediately, for her knight of the Hallowe'en mirror was far away, and she would not see Donald Hilton till school began.

CHAPTER II

CHICKEN SENSE

SO FAR, the weather had been ideal for the drive to New York. It was warm but not too warm. The roads were well dried off from recent showers, but not dusty, and the country looked fresh and green. They had stopped in some of the most delightful places their guests had ever seen, and the young people had made one long picnic of the whole trip, after their exciting day in Boston. Philip joked Campbell in private about the "Hilarious" time he was having and Campbell retorted with a conundrum, "Why are you like a sailor?"

"The answer has something to do with 'North,' I suppose?"

Campbell nodded.

"Because my compass always points to the 'North'?"

"That would be very good," assented Campbell, "but I was thinking—because you always know where the North is."

"What a pity that Aunt Sylvia and the girls have to miss our brilliant punning!"

But in spite of the special attraction which Hilary had for Campbell, and Lilian had for Philip, the gentlemen of the party were attentive to all the ladies, as they should be, and cheerfully performed the duties which naturally fell to them in the absence of the chauffeur.

On this occasion they were picnicking. They had stopped at a farmhouse to buy corn and melons, and had also found fresh cookies and a big, warm apple pie. Philip, Campbell and the girls came back to the car with hands full.

“I got some of the thickest cream, Mother,” called Cathalina, “and the farmer’s wife made fresh coffee for us.” Cathalina held up two thermos bottles with triumph, and began to sing, “The farmer in the dell, the farmer in the dell! High, ho, the Derry, O, the farmer in the dell!” She had never been real sure of the words, but that made no difference!

“Hush, Kittens,” said Philip, who was always evolving some new nickname for his sister. He was beginning to hand his bundles to Lilian, who had climbed into the car. “The man directed us, Mother, to a place where there is spring water that he says is all right. Say! Campbell, why didn’t I think to buy a chicken?”

“Oh, we don’t want one,” said Mrs. Van Buskirk. “It would take too long to cook it. You can roast or boil the corn in a jiffy. By the way, did they have fresh butter?”

“Oodles,” said Philip. “I saw them doing up a little pat for Cathalina in a clean cloth and some oiled paper!”

“If I hadn’t seen those chickens in time up the road—” began Campbell, and the rest started to laugh.

“That fat old hen that decided to cross the road just before we got to her would have been about the right size.”

“Too tough, Campbell,” said Betty, laughing.

“I saw a man just out of Boston,” remarked Philip, “that had chicken sense.”

“What sort of sense is that?” inquired his mother.

“Same kind that Campbell tells about. Concluded he wanted to cross just before we got there, couldn’t have waited till we passed, and I honked and put on the brakes just in time! It’s a sort of disturbance of the mental gearing, I guess. Seeing the machine makes them think of trouble.”

“I remember the incident,” said Mrs. Van Buskirk. “But we have to be ready for things like that. It’s the easiest thing in the world to blame the pedestrian. But I was brought up in the good old days of the carriages that we had up to about ten years ago, and we were trained to protect the people on foot.”

“Hear, hear!” said Philip as he started the car. “Everybody hold on to the lunch. It’s just around the curve in the road, I believe.”

In a few minutes, Philip turned the machine into the shade of some trees and bushes by the roadside, while they looked up a gently rising little hill to a tangled wood and a succession of ravines and hills.

"This looks good, plenty of wood for a fire, a cleared space in front, and stony. I suppose the spring is back farther. Think you can get up there, Mother?"

"It will certainly be a pity if I can't," replied his mother. "You just watch me! Come on, Campbell, give me a hand and we will hunt for the spring. I can carry that little hamper, too."

"Indeed not, Mother," replied Philip. "I'm convinced. You need not prove your prowess further! We'll bring all the stuff up while you hunt for water. This is the Swiss Family Robinson! Can you tell, Hilary, by the bark, whether a banana tree is bearing cocoanuts this year or not?"

"One thing we can do, Philip," said Betty—"make clothing for the family out of the skins of all the wild animals you and Campbell catch!"

"Look out, there!" cried Philip suddenly, and he reached out a hand to pull Lilian toward the car. She had gotten out on the side next the road and was gathering together some of their wraps and packages. With one wild honk, a car whizzed around the corner, balanced on its outer wheels, continued a little further and stopped. It was a large car like their own, with only one occupant, a man

who was having trouble with his engine. It puffed and snorted for a while, but the girls and Philip did not wait to see the outcome when they saw that the car had not turned over. With their lunch, and various comforts in the way of robes and wraps to sit on, they pursued their way toward the woods, after Philip had closed and locked the car.

"Did you find the spring, Mother?" asked Philip.
"I must needs bathe my fevered brow."

"It is only a few steps down the side of the ravine," replied Mrs. Van Buskirk, pointing. "All of you will want a cool drink, as Campbell and I did. This is a beautiful place for a picnic. I'm glad we came around this way. How did you happen to know about this road? It isn't on the map."

"Pat pointed it out as we came from home and said that there was a way to get through here, but not many tourists used the road because it was not good in some places, and especially bad in wet weather. If it had rained, I would not have brought you here. But I thought we could just about do it and make our next stopping place by night."

While this conversation was going on the girls were preparing the eatables and the boys gathering sticks for the fire. All the accompaniments for a picnic lunch were contained in the Van Buskirk car. It was an easy matter to serve it. But to save time, most of their meals on the way were taken in hotels or tea rooms along the roads.

As the picnickers were enjoying their lunch, the man of the car below came up the hill with a cup, and inquired of Philip where the spring was located. Philip rose and showed him the place, asking if he needed any help on his car.

"I was going to ask you if you can loan me a few tools," replied the man, "but I did not like to call you away till you had finished your lunch."

"Oh, that is no matter," and Philip went down hill to find one or two small implements that the man told him he lacked. "Just leave them on the step," said Philip, "when you are through."

"Funny looking customer," remarked Campbell, when Philip came back.

"He was real polite, though," said Betty.

"Do you suppose he will put the tools back?" asked Mrs. Van Buskirk.

"I guess so. He had almost everything he needed himself. His tire seems to be punctured and he is fixing it up."

"Why doesn't he put on a new one?" inquired Cathalina.

"Possibly he hasn't any, or wants to be economical. Shall I go down and ask him?"

"You seem to be getting sarcastic, Philly," was Cathalina's comment. "I don't blame you, though. Who can eat this last ear of corn? Going, going—gone!" and Cathalina put it on Philip's picnic plate. "We ate more while you were gone. Now it's time

for pie. Mother, there's more coffee for you, and, Lilian, you positively must finish up this marmalade you like. Campbell, *can't* you eat another cookie? A New England cookie? a spice cookie? a crisp brown cookie?"

"Sounds like lines from the 'Old Oaken Bucket,'" said Campbell, "but if I am to eat a piece of apple pie, I must positively refuse to take anything else. The 'little birdies' will eat it, Cousin. Lilian, can't you compose an ode to 'The Last Cookie'?"

"'Twas the last cookie in the hamper," began Lilian in song, "left cru-hum-bling a-a-a-a-lone! All its—I fear me that the tune of the 'Last Rose of Summer' is a little intricate at this stage! May I have my piece of pie?"

"Pie it is," answered Philip, as he took Lilian's plate.

The party took its time over the dessert, much spring water, and the gathering up of impedimenta. While they were thus engaged, they heard the engine of their neighbor below start, a honk from his horn, and looked up to see him wave and call, "Thank you." He looked back once with a broad grin upon his face, then disappeared in a cloud of gasoline smoke.

"That was a funny performance," said Mrs. Van Buskirk. "I thought his face ugly enough before, but that grin was positively malicious. I suppose he has gone off with your tools, Philip."

Philip was really annoyed at this implication of his carelessness, but was too courteous always to his mother to show it much.

"I guess we'll find 'em all right, Mother," he replied.

As they went down the hill to the car, they noticed a decided cooling of the atmosphere with the passing of the afternoon.

"Do you think that we will get in early enough, Philip?"

"Yes, Mother, and the night will be beautiful, moonlight still. We ought to make a hundred miles easily after we get out on the main road, and that will take us into a good town, though there are some fair little villages along. No, thanks, Campbell, I'll drive till we get out of this hilly place. I know the car a little better."

Everybody climbed in but Philip, who had picked up the borrowed tools from the step with an air of triumph, and paraded them before his mother and Cathalina. He took a last look at the tires and stepped around behind the car—when they heard him exclaim in surprise. "The scoundrel!" he said.

"Why, what's the matter, Philip?"

"That thief has helped himself to our extra tire! *That* is why he gave us that farewell grin! Wait till I catch up with him!" Philip hurried into the car and made ready to start.

"Wait, Philip," said Campbell. "Are you sure

that our tires are all right? He would know, of course, that the first thing you would want to do would be to catch him or get to a telephone."

"Telephoning would not do any good. He'll keep to out of the way places and go around the towns. I bet that his car is a stolen one!"

Both Campbell and Philip got out, and went around to look closely at tires and wheels. "I can't find a thing out of the way," said Campbell.

"I thought they were all right when I looked before," said Philip.

"Do be sure about it," said Mrs. Van Buskirk anxiously, and the girls leaned out with faces showing concern.

"Maybe he has put a few tacks around," suggested Campbell, beginning to look along the ground." Perhaps he thought we would start, though, without finding out about the theft. The back of the car was so concealed by those bushes."

"I wish I had thought to have the whole car where we could see it from where we were! Chicken sense! Chicken sense!"

At this the girls exploded into laughter, while Mrs. Van Buskirk reached out to pat Philip's sleeve and say "Never mind, son, we can't think of everything."

"Oh, yes, Mother, you are very fine about it, but I know you are thinking how I just shook those tools in your face!" Philip was rather enjoying the joke

on himself now. "That chap thought that we'd never notice if he left the tools all right."

"Drive carefully, Philip, for fear the man did do something to the car."

"I will, Mother."

They started down the hill, around curves, across little bridges, where the narrow road like a ribbon wound in and out.

"Suppose the man had trouble again and we *should* catch up with him," suggested Betty. "What would we do?"

"Not a thing, Betty," replied Philip. "He would have a gun. The only way we could really catch him and get our tire would be to get the police after him at some place on the route. You girls need not worry. We are not anxious to take you into trouble. I only want to get on the main road before we have anything happen to a tire."

"And we are one hundred miles from a town!" said Mrs. Van Buskirk.

"Oh, no, Mother. You are thinking of what I said; but, remember, I mentioned villages. It isn't that far from a place where we could stay, and I think that it is only a few miles from a village where I could get a tire, or have something fixed if necessary. See, we are in sight of the main road now."

Philip had scarcely spoken when there was a loud report—then a second.

"There are the tacks, Philip," said Campbell.
"The villain's plot is bared!"

"Melodrama!" said Lilian.

The girls as well as the boys left the car to examine the road where the two tires had been punctured. "Glass and all sorts of sharp things," said Philip. "He must go prepared for occasions like this. See? All this never came here by chance."

Campbell walked over to the other side of the road. "Nothing here," he reported. "But it was made sure that on the other side we couldn't miss it."

"Perhaps since we had been kind," suggested Mrs. Van Buskirk, "he wouldn't leave us stranded up in the hills, and let us come nearer civilization before our tires were punctured."

"You would be bound to find some good in him, Mother," said Philip. "Do we go forward on rims, or do we patch up? Two tires!"

Campbell was already getting out the "first aid" equipment. "He knew we'd need the things he borrowed, all right!" said he. "Come on, Phil, we may as well get to work. You ladies can enjoy the beauties of nature for the next hour or so. Get out your field glasses, Hilary. I heard a grasshopper sparrow over in that field."

The girls scattered, Hilary and Lilian with the field glasses, Cathalina and Betty to look for wild flowers, while Mrs. Van Buskirk hunted out a book from the luggage. The two young mechanics worked

busily, having taken the machine on beyond the possibility of another puncture. The "villain" had contented himself with preparing the one place for trouble.

"Say, Phil," said Campbell, suddenly, "have you looked to see whether we have enough gas?"

"You haven't forgotten, have you, that we just got a supply at the little town before we struck this road?"

"No, I haven't, but you forget our friend who needed the tire. Perhaps he needed some gas, too."

Philip finished the particular detail he was on with only the laconic remark, "Chicken sense," and then started an investigation of the tank, with Campbell as an interested spectator and assistant. "You're right. He needed almost all of it. But I think that there is enough, with that little can that Mother, always insists we take along, to get us where we can fill up again. Mother, here is where your forethought gets the applause."

Mrs. Van Buskirk smiled and placidly read on.

Finally the work was done. Philip and Campbell gave the whistles of their college fraternity, to call the wandering girls, and the party once more were off. The car ran easily, and the gasoline lasted until they reached the first town, which, fortunately, happened to be of a fair size, and Philip thought that he could find another tire there to replace the stolen one. But just as they turned into the street where they

had been told the shop they were seeking was located, they saw a small crowd gathered about a machine a short distance ahead.

“It’s our man!” exclaimed Philip, and he brought up his car to the curb not far from the source of excitement. He and Campbell lost no time in arriving on the scene, while the girls and Mrs. Van Buskirk watched with interest.

“They’re taking him out of the car!” said Betty.

“Yes; see those two policemen?”

“I suppose that is the sheriff.”

“Philip’s talking to him. I wonder if we’ll have to wait for a trial or anything.”

“Mercy, no. At least, I hope not.”

“Look, there is a nice looking gentleman there—I wonder who he is.”

Thus ran the comments on the moving picture before them, which lacked the usual printed information. “I suppose it wouldn’t be proper for us to go any nearer,” said Cathalina, whose interest had reached the point of curiosity.

“Certainly not,” replied her mother. “Always keep away from anything like that. I think that the car probably was stolen and that the owner is identifying it.”

In a few minutes Philip came back to the car, while Campbell was helping the other gentleman unfasten the Van Buskirk’s tire from the back of the stolen machine. Philip brought his car up close, the

tire was transferred to the place where it belonged, and the journey was resumed.

"Yes," said Philip, in answer to the questions. "They caught the fellow outside of town and brought him in. This gentleman had telephoned to the police and by good luck had just arrived on the trolley car. He had had other business there and just happened to stop, had telephoned several towns. The man confessed to having stolen our tire, and the other man knew it was not his, so it was quickly attended to. It seems that this fellow is wanted on several charges. The police seemed to know him. He had a gun, as we thought he would, and tried to use it when they caught him."

"He was an ugly customer," remarked Campbell. "We are very fortunate to have escaped so well," said Mrs. Van Buskirk. "If you had not closed the windows and locked the car, Philip, I suppose he might have stolen more."

The rest of the journey was pursued without any hindrance or unpleasant experiences. It seemed to the girls who were the guests that it was a beautiful dream of passing trees, hills, water and sky, seen from the midst of comfort and good companionship. Then came New York and the handsome home of the Van Buskirks.

CHAPTER III

THE HOUSE PARTY

LILIAN and Betty were as much impressed as Hilary had been, upon her first visit, with the beauty and quiet elegance of Cathalina's home. Betty shared Cathalina's room with its blue, silver and white fittings, while Hilary and Lilian occupied the rose room, which had been Hilary's upon that memorable Christmas time. "I thought it would be more fun for us to be close together," Cathalina said, "but if any of you would like to be alone, it can just as well be arranged."

"Who would want to be alone?" replied Lilian.
"This is delightful."

The baggage had come through safely, and the girls found their prettiest frocks all pressed and hanging in the closets. Cathalina's maid was a different one from the girl Hilary remembered, and Cathalina laughed as she explained what Phil called her "alliterative succession" of maids, Etta, Edna, Ethel and now Edith, "my 'French' maids," said Cathalina. "The last ones did not stay long. Mother did not think they were good, but Edith is fine. She is English."

Hilary and Lilian found another maid appointed to answer their bell, and confided to each other that they hoped not to make any mistakes in their own deportment regarding her. "Oh, it does not make any real difference," said Hilary. "If we are simple and nice, as we ought to be, I guess we shall not make any very bad mistakes. I think, Lil, that you might as well get used to one!"

Lilian blushed, for Hilary's meaning was not hard to understand, and the state of Philip's feeling toward Lilian had been quite apparent on their automobile trip. However, within the next twenty-four hours Lilian's ideas were to change somewhat.

Cathalina and Philip were as busy as could be in those first hours after their arrival, making arrangements for different sorts of good times.

"You will excuse me, won't you, girls, while I call up the family and get things started. I want some of them to come over tonight and I must find out who of the friends are in town." Cathalina, fresh from her bath, her soft brown hair prettily arranged by her maid, a cool, light summer dress floating about her, was an attractive picture as she sat by the little table to telephone.

"Is that you, Ann Maria? Good! I thought you girls would be back in time for us to see you. Did you have a great time? Yes, we had a wonderful summer at camp—more fun! Yes, we just came in an hour or so ago. How are Uncle and Aunt Knick-

erbocker? Oh, is that so? Well, why can't you stay all night here, then—you and Louise? We want you all to come after dinner tonight, to meet the girls. I'm going to call up Louise and Nan and Emily. Robert Paget will get in before dinner, Phil thinks. I'm calling Rosalie and Lawrence Haverhill, too. Anybody else that you can think of? Somebody we could ask on short notice. Oh, yes. I'll get Phil to call him. We'll have light refreshments. Come early."

Cathalina danced away and over to Philip's room, where she knocked.

"That you, Kitsie? All right, come in. That's all, Louis. There are the letters to be mailed."

Philip was as freshly attired as Cathalina and making great plans for happy hours with Lilian. "Be seated, Miss Van Buskirk!"

"No, thanks, Phil—I just had a little matter to speak to you about. If Mother thinks it's all right, would you mind calling up a young man I met at school last year—if he's in town—and can come—"

"Lots of 'ifs' in the way, it seems," said Philip, his eyes sparkling. Why should Philip worry about anything? Was not the sweetest girl in the world in the same house with him?

"Yes, Philly, that's so. I'm not sure it's proper to be so informal with him, but Mother will know about that. It's the Captain Van Horne that was nice to me at school last year, you know. We ex-

changed addresses and he asked me if he could call, or I invited him to call, I don't remember which. He is an instructor in the military school."

"I remember about him. Of course it's proper for me to ask him to come around, and if he can't come tonight, shall I ask him for the other party, or to call to see us?"

"Yes, please. You're a good brother."

"By the way, Cathalina, after the telephoning could you manage to let me have Lilian to myself a while—out on the veranda or somewhere? I'll find the place, if I can get the girl!"

"Yes, Philly, indeed I will. You've hardly had a good visit with Lilian since we started from Boston." Cathalina gave Philip a roguish glance as she whirled out of the room. Phil mischievously winked, put his hand over his heart and said, "I now call up the Van Horne at his ancestral abode, but I was saving you for Bob Paget."

"Oh, let Betty have him," Cathalina called as she disappeared down the hall in the direction of the girls' room. "Boys always like Betty."

"What is that, Cathalina?" asked Betty. "Seems to me I heard my name."

"You did. I was just making the wise remark to Philip that boys always like you."

"How horrid! That doesn't sound like you, Cathalina."

"You don't know the circumstances. We were

planning who was for whom at our party and I mentioned you for a certain young man and made that remark. You are always lovely and pretty and the boys do like you."

The girls had been having a confab in the rose room in Cathalina's absence. Lilian was looking in the mirror to see if the maid's hair dressing had been effective. "Oh, Cathalina," said she, "please tell me about some of your relatives that will be here. Remember that we haven't been here before, like Hilary."

"You'll not have such a time as poor Hilary had," said Cathalina with a laugh. "She had to meet the whole clan, aunts, uncles and cousins, at our regular Christmas gathering, and had a great time to straighten us all out. Campbell insisted on giving her the whole family history."

"Probably that was just as well," said Betty, with meaning.

"Tonight," continued Cathalina, "there'll just be the young folks. Campbell will bring his sisters over, or at least Emily. Sara is younger. Emily is about a year older than Campbell. Then Louise Van Ness, who is about Phil's age, and Nan Van Ness, who is my age, will be here. Rosalie Haverhill is an old friend of mine, and her brother Lawrence, who has been attending the same school as Phil, has been one of his best friends. Oh, yes, Ann Maria Van Ness is the niece of Uncle and Aunt

Knickerbocker, who lives with them. She and Louise have been great chums, and in the same set of young folks with Phil and Lawrence. Robert Paget is Phil's friend, you know, who is coming today. Phil had a telegram from him not long ago. He's going to the station in the car pretty soon to meet him. He and Phil and Campbell and Lawrence are all in the same fraternity. Ann Maria suggested another friend of hers and Philip's, but he had another engagement. This will be a very informal affair indeed, gotten up on the spur of the moment, as it were. There'll not be enough boys to go around, of course, but we can all have a jolly talk, and I'm going to have a real party before you leave."

By this time the girls were on their way downstairs. Philip was in the hall with some fresh roses just picked, which he proceeded to give to the girls, saving Lillian's till the last. He was so evidently waiting for her that the other girls kept on, out upon the wide porch with its fine columns, while Philip drew Lillian into the library, and put the rose in her hair. "I want to show you the gem of our whole place," said he; "Dad's library." Many, many times in days to come was Lillian to remember that cool, beautiful room, the quiet talk with Philip, the rose in her hair and the look in Philip's eyes.

They walked around looking at the books, then sat down on the window seat to talk, more about

the music, of which they were both so fond, than of the books.

"Your voice, Lilian, is wonderful. It has a quality in it that holds your audience. You've felt it yourself, I suppose."

"I love it when I can hold them," replied Lilian, "but I'm usually not thinking about them, only of what I'm singing."

"You ought to be studying with some big New York teacher. We have better teaching right here in America than they have in Europe, and have had for years, so my professor at school said."

"Oh, wouldn't I love to study here!"

"Are you going back to Greycliff after this year?"

"I can't tell. We all love Greycliff so, but Hilary thinks that her people may plan for her to go somewhere else, and if our 'quartette' is broken up we may not be so crazy about staying. We are going to have this year together, anyhow."

"Campbell and I get through college this year. You remember what I said about the war—when we were in the pine grove at camp?"

"Yes, indeed," said Lilian soberly.

"Well, we have promised the folks to finish this year at college, if possible, or at least not to go without their consent if we do get into the war. And you will write all year to me, won't you, as you promised?"

"Oh, yes."

"There is such a lot of us that I thought I'd better make sure to remind you. And, Lilian, did you mind what I said about——"

But Lilian did not hear the rest of this remark, for at this point Mrs. Van Buskirk entered the library and smilingly informed Philip that he would scarcely have time to reach the station before Robert Paget's train arrived. Philip looked at his watch.

"You're right, Mother! Excuse me, Lilian. I'm trying to persuade Lilian that she ought to have her voice cultivated right here in New York," and Philip dashed off.

While Lilian and Mrs. Van Buskirk were chatting, Cathalina came in.

"I've been seeing to the refreshments for tonight, Mother. I believe you will have to plan for the real party with the housekeeper."

"Very well. You want something more elaborate, I suppose."

"Oh, yes; just as elaborate as I can have it."

"Will it be very formal?" asked Lilian, who was thinking of her somewhat limited wardrobe. The girls had not taken much to camp except the regular camp attire.

"Oh, no. The boys would hate it. It is too hot for dress suits. They can wear their white flannels or palm beach suits or anything they like. I'll have Phil call up all the boys and tell them 'informal.' There isn't time to send written invitations 'with

propriety,' as Aunt Katherine says, and it will not be such a big party. But I want to have everybody that we are indebted to, if they are in town."

"What will the girls wear?"

"Their thin silks or lace and net, or sheer cotton stuffs. Your pink organdy will be just the thing, or that little silk that you sing in."

"I guess I'd better wear the organdy tonight and the silk frock at the party. How would that do, Mrs. Van Buskirk?"

"Nicely, my dear. Anything that you have at school is quite suitable for all our occasions."

"How comfortable and dear your mother is, Cathalina," said Lilian after Mrs. Van Buskirk had left the room.

"Yes, isn't she? And you ought to hear the things she says about you. I believe she likes you even better than Betty and Hilary, but I oughtn't to say that. Her heart is big enough for our whole quartette. Come on, let's get the other girls and see what flowers we can find for the rooms."

"Imagine your having such lovely roses at this time in the year. How do you manage it?"

"They have special care, and some of them are from our little hothouse."

The four girls were still outdoors when Philip returned with Robert Paget, and turned to look, as "Pat," back from Boston, took out two bags and a suitcase, and three young men stepped out of the car.

"*Three*," said Cathalina in surprise. "I wonder who the other one is. That is Robert in the light grey suit."

"Why, that looks like Dick!" exclaimed Lilian. "It is Dick! How in the world did Dick——" Lilian started toward the house; then, recollecting that Dick was not the only young man there, drew back. The three young men did not see the girls and went up the steps and into the house.

"Let's go in and fix the flowers," said Cathalina, "and by that time the boys will be downstairs, I think, and Mother will know about it at least."

Mrs. Van Buskirk met the girls in the hall. "Why, Lilian," said she, "we have a great surprise for you."

"I saw him," replied Lilian. "How did it happen?"

"He came to New York on business again, Phil said; did not know that you were here, and he and Robert Paget were on the same train. Phil saw him get off just in front of Robert and, as he said, 'nabbed him.' "

"He and your father were here while we were in camp, weren't they?" said Betty, recalling some news of Lilian's.

"Yes; for years one of Father's old friends has been wanting to get him into a law firm here in New York, and now that Dick is starting Father is more interested, though he can't bring himself to

leave the old town." So Lilian explained to Mrs. Van Buskirk and the girls. "He always laughs and says 'Better be a big toad in a small puddle than a little toad in a big puddle.' "

"I believe your father would be a 'big toad' anywhere," said Mrs. Van Buskirk. "We enjoyed him so much that time he and Richard were out for dinner with us."

"Oh, wouldn't it be *lovely* if your people would move to New York!" exclaimed Cathalina. "Why, haven't you said something about it before?"

"I never thought of it, because Father never gave us any reason to think he would do it. And it didn't occur to me till now that it might be the reason for this summer's visits. But I feel sure—almost—that it must be now that Dick is here again. Perhaps he will come if Father does not."

"That makes another young man for tonight!" and Cathalina waved a hand full of flowers. "Is Dick engaged? Will he be bored at company?"

"No, to both your questions. Dick likes a good time as well as anybody. Oh, there he is!"

"Go on down and meet your sister," said Philip from the landing, and Robert Paget, who was in the lead, stopped to let Richard North pass. Dick embraced his sister, and turned to greet Mrs. Van Buskirk. As by this time the others had reached the foot of the stairs, general introductions followed.

CHAPTER IV

THE HOUSE PARTY—CONTINUED

DINNER had been concluded some time ago. The girls were settling themselves in the swing, or wicker chairs, near one corner of the veranda.

“Lilian, you look like a rose in that pink organ-dy,” said Betty.

“That’s sweet of you to say, Pansy Girl.” Betty had sometimes been called that since she had worn the pansy dress in the masquerade. “But you look more like forget-me-nots tonight in blue. And Cathalina is like a lily—lilies of the valley and English violets.”

“My white and coral are not much like violets,” said Cathalina.

“Sweet peas, then. They have every color.”

“What’s Hilary, if we must all be flowers?”

“Oh, Hilary’s all the fresh spring flowers that we are glad to see in the spring, hyacinths and lilacs and syringas——”

“Fresh! I like that.”

“Don’t try to put a wrong construction on what I say. Heliotrope and mignonette, that is it.”

“Nonsense,” said Hilary. “I’ll be a sturdy old red geranium that lasts all the year around, and even if you hang it up by the roots in the cellar it grows leaves and flowers the next year.”

“All right, Hilary—our little red geranium!” The girls laughed at this nonsense and looked up in surprise to hear another laugh near by. Mr. Van Buskirk had come out on the porch and stood leaning against a pillar behind them.

“If you want my opinion,” said he, “I should say that this is as pretty a cluster of roses as we ever had at this house, Hilary quite as blooming as the rest.”

“We thank you,” said Betty, rising and curtseying deeply, while the rest followed her example.

“Are you expecting company soon?” inquired Mr. Van Buskirk.

“We told them to come early,” said Cathalina. “I think I see Campbell and Emily now. Do we stay out here or go inside?”

“Out here—why not?” said Philip appearing in the doorway and sauntering out toward them. “There come the Van Nesses. Come on out, Bob. Where’s Dick? Oh, here he comes,” added Philip, as the rapid toe-tapping of some one running down stairs was heard, and Richard North followed Robert and Philip. Mrs. Van Buskirk made her appearance before Campbell and Emily had reached the top of the steps. The guests arrived at very

nearly the same time and were cordially greeted. Robert Paget had been there before and knew Philip's relatives, but everybody had to be introduced to Richard North, as well as to his sister and Betty. Mr. and Mrs. Van Buskirk were particularly interested in meeting Captain Van Horne, of whom Cathalina had written. Who was this young man who had succeeded in making an impression on their little girl? He disclaimed the title of captain as he was introduced, saying that it was only appropriate when he was a part of the military school organization, but the Greycliff girls continued to address him as Captain Van Horne.

Campbell's sister Emily was glad to see Hilary again, and after a little chat with her, passed her over to Campbell, who, she guessed, was hoping to have a good visit with her. And as Cathalina was busy welcoming the different ones, Emily tried to make Captain Van Horne feel at home by chatting with him. It was like Emily, fine girl that she was, unconscious of herself and interested in every church and public or private enterprise to help others. Both were more mature than the rest of the young people.

"And here's my dear cousin Philip!" exclaimed Ann Maria, handing her wrap and scarf to one of the maids who had come out to assist at this informal affair, and then holding out both hands to

Philip. "Come and give an account of yourself. I've scarcely seen you all summer."

"Naturally not, my dear young lady, when you have not been within calling distance. Come and meet our guests."

Ann Maria Van Ness was as straight as Aunt Katherine, who had brought her up—graceful, with an assured manner and a handsome, striking face. Her voice had a pleasant quality and her dress a style which made Hilary and Lilian feel countrified at once. She fairly took possession of Philip, and claimed considerable attention from the other young gentlemen, all without a single unlady-like act.

Philip, upon request, brought out his guitar, and the young company sang the well known songs of the year. When they started the pretty and sentimental song so familiar, then, among college students, "Why I Love You," Lilian's voice was so beautiful that all with one accord stopped singing and let Lilian's soprano and Philip's tenor finish the last two stanzas. But Ann Maria was fidgety and complained of mosquitoes.

"All right; let's go in, folks," invited Philip. "Ann Maria, I want to hear your latest recital number."

Accordingly, all trooped into the large front room, where Ann Maria sat down at the piano, dashed off the latest popular tunes and finally en-

tered the classical realm, playing a difficult composition exceedingly well.

"She can play well!" exclaimed Hilary, in surprise, to Campbell and Lilian, with whom she happened to be grouped. Robert Paget was near, also, and replied, "Yes, but she can not equal Phil. Wait till I get the old boy started."

But it was not necessary for Robert to ask Philip. Ann Maria herself made the request, as she rose from the piano. "I have to get in my playing before Philly begins," said his cousin. "Come and give us your latest composition."

Philip rather protested, saying, "It is not for the host to play; it is for the guests." But, seeing they all wanted to hear him, he took his place at the baby grand, played the different compositions they asked for, then placed some music before him and beckoned to Cathalina. After a few words with Philip, she went over to escort Lilian to the piano. Philip rose and said, "We promised several of the family that they shall hear you sing, Lilian. Will you please come now?"

"Yes, indeed," replied Lilian, "but when I think of the music you people can hear in this city, I do hesitate to sing for you."

"Oh, but we love your voice," said Cathalina.

Lilian had scarcely ever found it so hard to sing. She knew that there was at least one listener who was critical, and she felt her own youth and lack

of training. But Lilian was always ready to help make the social machine run smoothly, and now moved to the piano with much grace and sweetness. In a few minutes she had forgotten herself in singing to Philip's sympathetic and beautiful accompaniment, and felt that exaltation which often held her and her hearers as well. A murmur of appreciation greeted her at the end of the first song and they kept her singing for a while, Philip so happy and proud, and Mrs. Van Buskirk leaning forward to listen and watch the flushed face and rapt eyes of the young singer.

Captain Van Horne managed to sit by Cathalina during the music, and in the intervals between numbers she entertained him by telling about the people present or their fun at camp, and asked him about his busy summer.

"My 'attic' has been quite warm," said he, "but I have studied and read in different cool spots, attended my law classes and have filled up my time in other ways."

Cathalina knew that he was doing something to help make his way, but she did not refer to that. She thought that he looked worn and wished that she might put a little cheer into his dull days. Cathalina was learning much sympathy, as she began to realize the responsibilities that some of her friends had to carry. The old self-centered little

girl that knew nothing of life's serious interests had long since disappeared.

Richard North was becoming acquainted with pretty, plump, fair Louise Van Ness, with Emily, and, of course, with the vivacious Ann Maria.

Nan Van Ness was the cousin of Cathalina's age who used to copy Ann Maria, whom she greatly admired, as younger girls do admire the older ones sometimes. But Nan, now, had been away to school herself, and like Cathalina, had become interested in many things on her own account. She and Betty were having great fun with Lawrence Haverhill and Robert Paget. Rosalie Haverhill had not come.

It was "a nice party," as Lilian said to herself, and she wondered why she could not seem to enjoy it more, for Lilian was a gay-hearted girl, at the head of most of the fun among her chums at school. In her heart she knew that it was the relation of Ann Maria to Phil that troubled her. But she went right on, taking part in all the visiting and fun. By chance she was with Louise and Ann Maria when the cooling ices and pretty cakes and fresh fruit were served and Philip himself waited on both her and Ann Maria, with the same courtesy to both!

"He is that way with all the girls," she thought. "His attention to me hasn't meant a thing. His 'musical wife,' indeed! Ann Maria plays, and I sing." Lilian was thinking of Philip's conversation in the pine grove at camp, when he "seemed so

serious," spoke of planning for a musical wife, and first asked her to write to him. And now jealousy whispered that it had not been earnest. All this ran through her mind while she talked to the girls, told of their most thrilling experiences in camp, and laughed with the rest. Ann Maria did not stay all night, as Cathalina had urged her to do. No, indeed. She handed her wraps to Philip to put on for her, and Philip took her home. To be sure, there were others in the car, Campbell, Emily, Louise and Nan, but Ann Maria sat in front with Phil, who drove. And Lilian did not know that Philip had asked his mother if he might not take Lilian, too. "You may, but it isn't best," Mrs. Van Buskirk had answered. "Since all the girls can't go, you'd better not ask any of them."

The days were few for all the good times. There was so much of the city to be seen, lunches to be taken in odd places, drives here and there, an entertainment or two on Broadway, a dinner at the Stuarts', and as a climax the "real party." For this, each lass had a lad, each lad a lass to escort to the tables for the elaborate meal served by Wattie and a capable group of waiters. As Mrs. Van Buskirk had decided that there would be time to issue invitations, they had been sent out to all the more intimate circle of Cathalina's and Philip's friends.

Philip insisted that he was to have Lilian. Hilary, of course, was assigned to Campbell. Their friend-

ship proceeded on its calm and apparently unsentimental way, but Campbell was there and with Hilary as much of the time as possible. There was quite a discussion between Cathalina and her mother about Captain Van Horne.

"Now, Mother dear," said Cathalina, "if Captain Van Horne is invited for Emily or Louise, he'll have to go for her, send her flowers, I suppose, and he hasn't any car, and I would be right here, and it would be all right if he did not think of flowers."

Her mother laughed. "You are greatly concerned, Cathalina."

"Indeed I am. I like him, though I like Robert Paget, too. But Captain Van Horne is older and I think it would be all right for him to take me out to supper, don't you? He's a teacher, too."

"How would you arrange it, then?"

"Let Bob take Betty, or would it be better to have him take Ann Maria?"

"Ann Maria would rather have one of our house guests, I think——"

"Since she can't have Phil," finished Cathalina.

"Don't say that, Cathalina."

"All right, then; Bob for Ann Maria, and Dick for Louise. They can go for the girls together in our car. Lawrence Haverhill can have Betty. Oh, yes, I had forgotten; he asked Phil if he might not."

The girlish guests were quite excited when the

fateful night arrived. Lovely bouquets had arrived for them. "Look at Cathalina!" said Betty. "With all the flowers she has, she is as excited as any of us over her roses."

"Well, who sent them?" asked Cathalina. "Wouldn't you be excited if a distinguished officer in a military school sent you flowers?"

"*I am* excited," said Lilian, holding to view the most beautiful roses of all. "And I'm sure nobody could be more gifted than the young gentleman who sent these,"

"Listen to 'em rave," said Betty to Hilary in pitying tones. "I fancy I hear Lilian sing 'I Dreamt That I Dwelt in Marble Halls.'"

At this Lilian pretended to advance threateningly upon Betty, who fled behind Hilary. Hilary warded both off, and laughingly warned them that with their nonsense they might easily spoil all the bouquets.

"Don't worry, Hilary, none of us ever really do anything. We just threaten. I can't bear any physical nonsense or tricks."

"Nor I, Lilian," said Betty.

This social occasion was a much happier one to Lilian than the first, for while Philip was the attentive and gallant host, each lady was provided with an especial escort, and he had at last an opportunity to devote himself to Lilian. But Lilian was an uncertain quantity since she had observed Ann

Maria with Philip. Her gay, though friendly, manner rather put a damper on any approach to the sentimental or serious, and she kept to the groups of young friends with whom they were surrounded. Mrs. Van Buskirk had engaged several professional musicians, in whose performance Lilian was especially interested. "You have *everything*, Philip," she said once, "and you ought to be thankful!"

"I am," said Philip, "but I haven't *everything* I want. And sometimes I think I shall have to do without what I want most."

That speech troubled Lilian for a moment, but just at that point Ann Maria and Robert Paget came up, with Nan Van Ness and her escort, and Philip turned a smiling face upon Ann Maria, as he replied to one of her sallies. "I need not worry about him," thought Lilian.

As she and Hilary crept into bed late that night, too tired to sleep, she asked Hilary if Ann Maria were Cathalina's first cousin.

"Oh, no," replied Hilary. "I believe her father was a first cousin of Mrs. Van Buskirk's. Oh, Lilian, wasn't it fine to have a maid pick up after you? I'm getting spoiled in the lap of luxury. It's a good thing I'm leaving. How convenient for you, too, that your brother could stay. I believe he had a good time, and now he can take you home."

"Yes, we'll have a good chat tomorrow on the

train and I'll have a better chance to find out what he and Father are going to do. Good night, Hilary."

"Not so very closely related. Then Phil could marry Ann Maria if he—they—wanted to."

CHAPTER V

IN CLASSIC HALLS

A THIRD year at Greycliff begun! Could it be possible? Where had the time gone? When the girls thought of their studies, they realized that there had been hard work enough to account for time, but when they thought of their frolics! And now they were in the collegiate classes. After all it was jolly to be a junior collegiate at Greycliff instead of a college freshman somewhere else. The senior collegiates were paying them a great deal of attention because of the society "rushing" which began at once. Most of these girls in the upper class they knew very well, because they had been senior academy students when some of our Lakeview corridor girls first entered as juniors in the academy.

Greycliff was as beautiful as ever, with its ivied buildings, velvet front campus, its "high hill" back of Greycliff Hall, its beaches, cliffs, windswept lake and tiny river. A new "Greycliff," a larger launch than the one which had been wrecked the previous

year, rocked on the water at the dock, to be raved over by the enthusiastic girls.

"I'm glad they didn't change the name, aren't you?" observed Hilary. "It's so appropriate."

"I don't know but I'd rather have a new name. It's hard for me to forget that time when we were all in the water, and afterward when we didn't know whether Dorothy and Eloise would ever come to or not."

"Oh, that's just nerves, Betty. You'll be all right after your first ride in this one. Think of bobbing up and down on the lake once more! I made myself get over it. It's never going to happen again. I love the water and I'm going to be in it and on it as much as possible. Besides I've learned to swim so much better at camp this summer."

"Yes," acknowledged Betty, "we feel perfectly at home in water now, and that would make a difference even in a storm, I suppose."

"I don't intend to lose what I've gained, either," added Cathalina. "I don't suppose I'll ever have the endurance that some folks have, but I can keep active, and, as you say, Betty, be at home in the water. No matter how heavy my school work is, I'm going to keep in the swimming classes, either in the lake, river or pool, as they have them."

"Now, then," said Lilian, "doesn't Betty make a nice mummy? I've even put a pillow for her head."

"Look out, and don't get any sand in my eyes,"

said Betty, winking, as Lilian patted the sand around her slender figure. "Now you've gotten my sandal loose," and the "mummy" wiggled her sandaled feet free from the sand coverlet and sprang up. "Come on; one more dive and then we'll go up and get ready for the Psyche Club meeting."

The September day had been warm and ideal for beach parties and swimming. The sandy beach was well occupied by water sprites in bathing suits of different colors. Classes had closed earlier than usual that Friday afternoon, to let the girls take advantage of the unusually warm day so late in September. Miss Randolph herself, and most of the women teachers, were down, and were having a teachers' beach party. But it was now almost time for dinner and some of the parties were beginning to break up.

"If the teachers are having such a big beach party, the dinner will be light, I'm afraid," said Lilian, as the girls went up to the hall.

"You forget the men," said Isabel Hunt, who had joined them. "They didn't have any beach parties, and will be as hungry as we are. Trust the matron to remember that."

"Anyhow we are going to have eats at the Psyche Club. We have a birthday cake for Virgie, you know. You didn't hint a word to her, did you, Isabel?"

"Not I, and she has forgotten that we said our first feast would be in her honor."

"Don't be too sure of that. Remember, she said she never had a birthday celebrated in her life."

"Well, she thinks we have forgotten, then; nobody has said a word about her birthday."

"Yes, there has," said Betty. "You know she came right on to Greycliff from camp, and I asked her if they celebrated her birthday, on the first, you know, and she said that she hadn't told anybody about it, so of course nobody did."

"Oh, they don't celebrate birthdays at Greycliff!"

"No, but there were several girls here the latter part of the summer, and I thought perhaps they had had some fun."

"Anyway, no one has called this a 'feast,' and I'm sure she can't suspect about the cake."

"Let's hope so."

"What else are you going to have?" asked Isabel.

"Sandwiches and lemonade," replied Hilary. "They are going to let us have some ice. And we are going to have ice-cream delivered from Greycliff Village at exactly eight-thirty, and we have a box of candy for Virgie. Cathalina had Philip send it. That's all beside the cake. We have permission to stay up till ten o'clock if we are quiet."

"I think it would be fun if we all gave Virgie something."

"It might make her feel uncomfortable," said

sensible Hilary. "We did think of getting some ten-cent store things, just for fun, but decided not to. Remember how dignified we are getting to be—collegiates!"

"And we have a lot of business to transact, too. Aren't we going to elect officers, and maybe a new member or two?"

"I don't know, Isabel. For my part I'd rather just have a social meeting. We might talk things over, of course."

"Oh, yes, Hilary," said Betty; "let's not have any business this time."

"Why bother to make any plans at all?" remarked Lilian; "no hurry about anything."

"True," said Hilary; "but we've got to straighten up our little suite before dinner. It's a sight. We've been letting things go all week in the excitement of getting started in classes and everything else. Besides we have forgotten how to live at Greycliff. First we had simple living and taking turns at the little bit we had to do at camp. Then we had luxury at Cathalina's with nothing to do, and if the rest of you were like me at home you did little but scramble around for some school clothes to wear, and visit with your folks. I followed Mother around and helped a little, while we talked *all* the time—so much to tell about the whole summer, and so little time to tell it in. One morning it was too funny. We had a regular procession. The maid

was away, and I wiped the dishes for Mother and talked, while Gordon, Tommy, June and Mary were all in the kitchen, listening and putting in a little occasionally, especially June about camp. Then, when we went in another room, they all followed, and when Mother and I went out into the yard to hang up a few towels to dry, Father saw us, coming out in line, and nearly perished with mirth."

"Imagine the dignified Dr. Lancaster's 'perishing with mirth'!" said Isabel.

"That was poetic exaggeration," admitted Hilary.

After dinner and the usual stroll outdoors till darkness fell and the bell for study hours rang, the Psyche Club began to gather in the suite occupied by Cathalina and Betty, Hilary and Lilian, for there was the same arrangement which had been made the year before. Juliet Howe, Pauline Tracy, Eloise Winthrop and Helen Paget, also, were together. Isabel Hunt and Avalon Moore had moved into a suite with Virginia Hope and Olivia Holmes, but Isabel and Virginia roomed together, and Avalon was with Olivia. Whether Virginia and Olivia should now be taken into the Psyche Club was a question to be settled. Evelyn Calvert, who had been with the girls at camp, was invited to this gathering, but Helen Paget was to go after her, and Isabel was to bring the other girls at the proper time.

"Are we all here?" asked Hilary at last. "Let's

have a brief business meeting and get the elections over. What do you say, girls?"

"All right," came from various quarters, and the president tapped for order.

"Has the nominating committee a report?"

"Yes, Madam President," replied Isabel, its chairman. "We offer the names of Cathalina Van Buskirk for president and Lilian North for secretary and treasurer."

"How shall we elect the officers? Are there any other names suggested? Sit down, Cathalina and Lilian. Nobody can refuse an office in the Psyche Club except when in—incapacitated!"

"I move that we elect by acclamation."

"Is this motion seconded?"

"I second the motion."

"It has been moved and seconded that Cathalina and Lilian be president and secretary, respectively. Any remarks? If any one has anything to say let him say it now or else forever after hold his peace! —except Cathalina or Lilian; they can't say anything till afterward."

The girls were all laughing at this high-handed proceeding.

"All in favor say 'Aye!'" A chorus of "Ayes" responded.

"All opposed, 'No.' " Silence.

"Cathalina and Lilian are unanimously elected."

"We will now regard the place where Cathalina

is as the 'chair.' My place is too comfortable to give to anybody."

Cathalina gave smiling thanks to the girl for her "high honor," and suggested that remarks about election of members were in order if some one would make a motion.

"I move, Madam President, that, considering our experience last year, we do not elect any members until their sentiments toward the Psyche Club be sounded out."

"Hear, hear!" said Eloise. "I think that Isabel's idea is good. Do you remember how we felt when Dorothy and Jane refused?"

"There were special influences there, and we might have known!"

"That's so, Lilian. Did we ever tell you how we appreciated your being the victim?"

"Oh, I didn't mind asking them, and I tried to take it gracefully. Shall we try to get them this year?"

"I was sure they hated to refuse, so let's wait and see if they are as intimate with that other crowd as they were last year. And when the invitations are out for the collegiate literary societies it may make a difference, too."

"How about Virginia and Olivia and Evelyn? I think it would be lovely to invite them tonight if we are going to do it."

"Does anybody know how they feel about it?"

"I should say we do!" said Isabel and Avalon in one breath. "Of course they haven't *said* a thing about it, but we can tell by looks and little remarks about the pins or compliments to you girls that they would be tickled to death if we asked 'em." This was Isabel who spoke. "*I'm* sure that we'll be proud to have Virginia wear our pin, and while Olivia isn't quite so good a student, she is a sweet, generous girl. Is there anybody that doesn't like her?" Isabel looked around the circle, while the girls shook their heads.

"This is all out of order, girls," said the new president. "There is no motion before the house! And Isabel's motion, which was not seconded, was negative so I can't put it."

"I move, Madam President," said Isabel, very formally, "that we elect the guests who are coming tonight."

"I second the motion."

Cathalina put the motion and it was carried, the girls mentioning the names of Olivia, Virginia, and Evelyn Calvert. "Go for them, girls," said Cathalina, "and spread the feast. Won't it be fun?"

"Hurry up, Hilary, and get the cake out in the middle of the table. Where are the candles?"

"In it, Betty. Isn't it a beauty? Virginia's name in red cinnamon drops just like the kiddies at camp!" The sandwiches were set out, the ice fixed in the lemonade, and by that time the guests were

heard coming down the hall and excited voices drew nearer.

“Who do you suppose is here?” cried Isabel, leading the way, and ushering in Diane Percy, while the other guests, all smiles, waited in the doorway.

“Diane!”

“Diane!”

“The other sweet P!”

“Why, Diane! You never told me you were coming!” cried Helen Paget. “My darling ‘Imp’!”

Virginia and Olivia were the only ones who would not have understood who Diane was, and it had been explained to them on the way, as with Isabel they had met Evelyn, Diane and Pauline. They were much amused to hear that Diane and Helen had been dubbed the “Imps” by some offended collegiates in their first year at Greycliff and had also been known as the sweet P’s—Percy and Paget.

After Diane had been duly embraced and welcomed, Cathalina called the girls to order for a moment and they dropped where they were, either into chairs or on the floor. Cathalina had had a brilliant thought, and explaining that she had a Psyche Club message to deliver which would not be a secret but for a few moments, she called Betty to her, whispered a moment, something which made Betty laugh and wave her hand in approval. Betty then made the rounds of the members, whispered a question, which was answered in every case with a

fervent "Yes, indeed!" and returned to Cathalina with the report, announced publicly: "Your question, O most worthy President, is answered in the affirmative by every member of the club."

"So be it," said Cathalina. "Dear guests of the Psyche Club, a short time before you were summoned a motion was presented and passed electing *our guests* to membership in the Psyche Club. I have the honor, then, to ask Miss Olivia Holmes, Miss Virginia Hope, Miss Evelyn Calvert and Miss Diane Percy if they will join us."

The girls enjoyed the surprised and happy expressions of Virgie and Olivia. Diane had not heard of the Psyche Club, but rose and said, "Whatever that club may be, beloved sisters, I am yours. Oh, isn't this fun? Girls, I don't see how I stood it not to come back last year!"

Evelyn told the girls that she had been aching for one of the butterfly pins, to say nothing of the honor of belonging to the club. Virgie and Olivia expressed their pleasure in a modest way, and Cathalina rapped for order again.

"There is one more happy event which I have the pleasure to announce. Part, indeed a great part, of this celebration is in honor of the birthday of one of our number." Here the guests were wondering whose it was. "The day itself is past, but we were not here to celebrate it, so we are having a little spread in honor of Miss Virginia Hope. Minions,

bring forward the banquet table!" Hilary and Betty were the minions who carried the table from behind a screen to the middle of the floor.

Virginia blushed deeply and stood dumbly while this was done, then lit the tapers as she was told. The girls joined hands and sang the camp birthday song as they circled around Virgie and the birthday cake. "Oh, it's perfectly lovely of you! I'll never get over it!" Isabel pretended to support her when the box of candy was presented by Lilian, and then the girls settled down to the joys of eating and talking, both of which they seemed to be able to do at the same time.

Eloise looked a bit sober. Lilian said afterward that she thought she saw tears in her eyes, and wondered why. But she soon brightened up and took her plate over close to Diane, where she sat down. As soon as she had opportunity, she said to Diane, "You used to room with Helen, you know, and I have been waiting to get a chance to tell you that I'll not stand in your way. *I'm* sure that Miss Randolph can arrange something for me, and you can have your place with Helen back. I suppose we can't do it tonight, but just as soon as it can be arranged."

"Aren't you a dear!" exclaimed Diane. "It is just like you, Eloise, but I wouldn't *think* of letting you do it. It is all arranged, my dear girl. My trunk was just brought up to Evelyn's room tonight.

She and I, with Dorothy Appleton and Jane Mills, have a suite together."

"Dorothy Appleton and Jane Mills!" exclaimed Eloise.

"Why do you exclaim over that?"

"Nothing, only—I'll tell you some time. They are fine girls—and, Diane, it is lovely of you to let me stay with Helen."

"I wanted to surprise Helen, so I did not write to anybody except to Evelyn after Miss Randolph suggested this arrangement. I've known Evelyn for a long time, though we were not very chummy that first year, and we shall be as happy as can be. You see I did not know whether I could come this year or not, and did not dare make arrangements till I was sure."

Diane told Helen and some of the other girls about Eloise's intended sacrifice, and Cathalina happened to repeat the story to Miss Randolph in one of her talks with her; for Miss Randolph never forgot to have an occasional visit with the niece of her firm friend, Katherine Knickerbocker. Not long afterward, Miss Randolph gave her first monthly address to the girls in the chapel. She had chosen as her subject "Heroines," and in the course of her remarks referred to a girl who was willing to give up her cherished place in one of the best suites in school for the happiness, as she thought, of two friends. "A girl who does any act, great or

simple, which requires courage and unselfishness, physical or spiritual, is a heroine. We want our girls to get so into the habit of doing the brave, noble thing, and of making the higher choice, that nothing else will ever occur to them. We want to train heroines in Greycliff!"

CHAPTER VI

A LITTLE "RUSHING"

"MERCY SAKES!" exclaimed Lilian, putting her books upon the table and inviting Isabel and Pauline to take seats by a wave of her hand. Cathalina, Betty, Hilary, Olivia and Eloise entered at the same time.

"Here's Cathalina wanting me to take a duty in the Latin Club," continued Lilian, "Hilary rooting for the French Club, Isabel for the Dramatic Club, everybody for the Collegiate Glee Club, to say nothing of the collegiate orchestra and the literary societies, if we get invited. I see what is ahead of me. When I am going to get time for mere studies is a question!"

"Nonsense, Lilian," said Pauline, "you don't have to prepare much for these clubs. The glee club practice and the different meetings only come at times when we'd be visiting or fooling around outdoors. The glee club will be adorable, and the girls always give one concert at Greycliff Village, and perhaps we are going to the military school this year, and to Highlands, too."

"Listen!" said Lilian. "I have two hours of practice every day, two lessons in voice a week, and one in violin."

"So have I," said Eloise, "only it is piano instead of violin."

Lilian went on without paying any attention to the remark of Eloise. "I have three hours of recitation on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, two hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays, Lab. on Saturdays, beside swimming, riding and any other athletics in which I may wish to indulge."

"You need a printed schedule, Lilian, worked out to every five minutes of your time," said Isabel.

"Worked out to seconds," insisted Lillian. "I'll have to take my books to the table."

"And what would Miss Randolph do to you?"

"Indeed, what wouldn't she?"

"Oh, Lilian, you are just having the usual brainstorm that girls have when they think of their work all together. I have one every fall, regularly," said Hilary. "You'll work it out. Put the work on your lessons first, and if you have to neglect anything, miss an occasional practice hour or one of the society meetings, or some of the athletics. I'm not going to play basketball this year."

"Oh, Hilary!" came in dismay from Pauline. "When we have so good a chance to beat the academy with you in the team these two years!"

"Well, I'll see. I haven't decided surely, but it does *not* look as if I'd have time."

"How do you work out a schedule?" asked Olivia. "You girls always seem to get along so well, and last year I'd forget and get behind."

"Take Lil's work, for instance," said Hilary. "Monday's lessons have to be attended to on the week end. I usually get in a little work on Friday afternoon, sometimes study a while before society meeting that evening. Saturday isn't a very successful day in lessons. You always think that you will get so much done, but there are things about your room and clothes to see to. I always 'mend and things' on Saturday, as Jane says. But there is some time, and study hours in the evening. Sunday I absolutely rest, and visit, in the afternoon, and write letters home. Then I get up early on Monday, look over lessons and get in what study I can in between classes. Probably Lilian can get ahead a little on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Her Monday evening will account for the two recitations of Tuesday, and so will the Wednesday evening take care of Thursday. I try to read ahead in the language courses whenever I have the next day's lessons prepared, so that I'm not rushed to death at the end of the week."

"Don't you ever study a bit on Sunday?"

"Not a bit, Olivia, and I get along all the better. Miss Randolph doesn't want us to, any more than

Father and Mother at home, and I'm always thankful that there is one day when I don't feel I ought to be studying every minute!"

"I never feel that way," laughed Olivia.

"But Sunday is always a busy day at home with church doings, and I used to feel a lot of responsibility. That is why they sent me away to school, so I'd have a chance like other girls. I liked it, though."

"Will you help me make out a schedule, Hilary?" asked Olivia.

"Indeed I will. Just go and get your list of studies and we'll do it now."

"I can just see Hilary, the handsome, grey-eyed, brilliant Hilary, as the future instructor of youth—can't you?" said Pauline, her own grey eyes shining affectionately upon Hilary as she pushed back her black locks and settled her plump self more comfortably in her chair.

"I could," replied Lilian, "if there were not other indications."

"Oh, yes!" said Pauline; "that mysterious Eastern youth of whom we have had an inkling. But Hilary distinctly said in her first year at Greycliff that she did not think of marrying. And, speaking of marriage, I wonder when Dr. Norris and Miss West are going to be married."

"By the way, Lilian," said Cathalina, "the reason I want you girls to help in the next Latin Club pro-

gram is that Patty has to get it up and said she wished we would help her."

"That changes it," said Lilian promptly. "Of course I'll help."

"The time till Christmas is always the hardest," said Cathalina, "because the studies are new, I guess, and there is so much to start. I'm doubling on Latin again, Vergil to Patty and De Senectute, as you know, to Dr. Carver. But I'm beginning to get the hang of Latin poetry and can find the adjective six or seven lines away from the noun, or the verb any old place, just as easily as putting together a puzzle. And *I'd* love Cicero's essay, if it were not for Dr. Carver."

"We'll all be together at last in her class," said Hilary.

"Lovely thought," said Isabel. "Oh, to be a junior collegiate and sit with the rest of you before the gentle Dr. Carver! Honestly, though, I'm just beginning to think how awful it will be here when you girls are through. Maybe I won't stay."

"Don't think about it yet, Isabel, we're here still."

"The collegiate society invitations are to be out today or tomorrow, they say," said Pauline.

"They will be soon, I'm sure, for the dear senior girls have just been living here for the last few days."

"Not quite that, Lilian," said Betty.

"Almost. In fact, this is the longest time outside

of study hours that *I've* been in the suite without at least one of them. There! That is probably one of them now."

But it was only Juliet, who was lonesome in her suite and came to see where her girls were, this, naturally, being the first place to be thought of. "What is this?" she asked. "Anything special?"

"No," replied Eloise. "We're just visiting. Where's Helen?"

"Around somewhere with Diane and Evelyn, or was when I came upstairs."

"We were just talking about the senior-junior societies and the rushing," said Betty.

"It is too killing for words,"

"Oh, don't say that. It is very flattering when they want you. I don't think that the girls are hypocritical, as Jane Mills says. They really want you to join their particular society, and if they rather overdo the attentions it is real pleasant anyway."

"Wait till some of them won't speak to you if you join the other society," said Isabel.

"How do you know that?" inquired Betty.

"Watched 'em last year and year before. I believe that each girl in a society thinks the girls in the rival societies will scarcely get into heaven!"

"Oh, Isabel!"

"I'll probably feel that way, too, if I ever get into one. Whatever one you girls go into I'm going to join, if I get a chance when I'm a junior collegiate!"

"Wouldn't it be dreadful if some of us would be invited for one and some for the other!"

"Why, then we needn't join any!"

"That wouldn't do, I'm afraid," said Hilary; "but what do you think about not worrying till the time comes?"

"Sensible idea," said Juliet.

At that point in the conversation there came a knock upon the door. It was one of the senior girls, and Lilian gave a little glance at Hilary, as if to say, "You see that we are not left alone long."

The visitor gave a comprehensive glance around the room to see who were there and said, "This is good—I'm saved a visit to your suite, girls, and you can tell Helen Paget for me. Why, we—some of us are having a little get-acquainted party tonight and are inviting some of the junior collegiates to come. We have permission, and the party will begin at eight-thirty. You will all come, won't you?"

"That is lovely of you," said Cathalina; "is it in your suite?"

"Oh, yes—silly of me not to say. Be sure to come."

"Can't you sit down and visit a while?" asked Lilian, naughty girl that she was.

"I can't this time, but I may drop in later in the day," and the visitor departed.

"She is really a dear," said Cathalina, "but I think she was a little embarrassed."

"They ought to have sent that friend of Myrtle's. *She* wouldn't have been embarrassed and would have had a separate and definite acceptance from every one of you before she thought of leaving." So said Isabel.

"Oh, does that girl belong to this society?"

"The same."

"Mercy, what a drawback!"

"But she's a g-r-e-a-t worker for her society."

"What are we going to do, girls? Won't it seem like pledging ourselves if we go to this feast?"

"Better not go, unless you really like this crowd best," said Isabel.

And Isabel had scarcely ceased speaking when two more visitors arrived. But the girls adopted a different plan of action. After greeting these girls, and pretty, bright girls they were, the girls kept chatting as if they were entertaining each other and the visitors, and the latter had no chance to deliver the invitation with which they, too, had come, until as they left they drew Cathalina and Hilary to the door and gave an invitation similar to the one which the girls had had before.

"What did you say, Cathalina? Did they insist on an acceptance?"

"I think that they knew we had had the other invitation, and they urged us a lot to come, but they did not insist on our saying we would. We thanked them and said we would let them know before eve-

ning. I guess we'll have to decide where we are going now, unless we go to both parties for a short time."

"Wouldn't that be a joke?—but it wouldn't do, and we must decide. But it is a funny thing to do before the invitations are out," said Hilary.

"I think that the first party was arranged to get you acquainted with their girls and half bound to join, and then the others found it out and arranged a party, too."

"It is very flattering, Isabel, and looks as if we were being considered by both societies."

"Dear me, Cathalina, this isn't the first that you have noticed that, I hope. Olivia, do you suppose any glory will reach us from being associated with such popular companions?"

"I don't know. I feel terribly left out not to be in the same literary society with them. And look at the party that we are going to miss!"

Hilary, who had begun to look over Olivia's list and to consider a schedule of recitations and study hours, looked up to say that while she was busy the other girls ought to think out what to do about the invitations. Betty pretended to tear her hair. The starry-eyed Eloise struck an attitude and stared into the distance with a fixed gaze. Juliet put her elbows on the table, rested her head on her fists and closed her eyes. Pauline in tragic tones cried, "Send for Helen, Evelyn and Diane!" Cathalina did nothing

but laugh at the other girls, and Isabel volunteered to go for the missing girls.

"That isn't a bad idea, a full council of war, because it makes more difference, our being separated, though of course there are lovely girls in both societies," said Cathalina. "We may feel as Isabel says we shall after we are in the societies, but I hope we shall not lose *all* our common sense."

When the three girls arrived, Betty with pencil and paper went the rounds, asking each girl two questions, "Which society do you prefer?" and "Which society has been rushing you?" Of Diane, Evelyn and Helen, who had been absent when the invitations were delivered, given, indeed, only to the members of the two suites, Betty asked, "Have the girls of either society asked you to a feast?"

"Helen is included with us," said Eloise.

"That is so. How about you and Diane, Evelyn, and Dorothy and Jane?"

"We all were invited to a party tonight by some of the Whittier society."

"Hurrah," said Betty, "that settles it! Which tried first to get us to commit ourselves?—the Emerson crowd. The Whittiers just asked us in self-defense. Listen!" Betty read the names of the girls and the answers to the questions. Several had no preference. Those who had expressed themselves were for the Whittier society.

"But what shall we do about the parties?" asked

Hilary, handing over a completed schedule to the grateful Olivia. "We were asked first to the Emerson party. I don't see that we can go to either."

"If we don't go to either, they may both be disgusted with us and not send invitations to any of us," said Diane.

"All right; let 'em," said Betty.

"The lady or the tiger?" said Isabel.

"We might send a nice little note to each, saying that we were embarrassed by having two invitations for the same time, and that in view of the circumstances, it seemed best not to accept either—something like that—although we appreciated being asked, and knew what a good time we should have."

This was Pauline's suggestion.

"Polly, that wouldn't do at all. In fact I don't see what on earth we can do!" This was Eloise.

"Cathalina, appeal to Miss Randolph."

"No, don't bother her with it!" exclaimed Juliet. "We ought to work it out ourselves. I have it—have Patty call a meeting of the Latin Club. There's the dinner bell! What *are* we going to do?"

"What is the reason you can't accept your first invitation? That would be considered fair," said Olivia.

"Don't you see, Olivia? If we go, they will consider that we are pledged to them, or at least it will make it very awkward, after accepting their hospitality and all."

"Whatever we do has to be decided on right after dinner. Everybody think it over, please," said Betty. "There's no hope in Patty, because there never would be a Latin Club meeting at that time."

What the girls would have done will never be known, for the matter was settled for them in an unexpected way by Miss Randolph herself. At the close of dinner she rose and announced a practice of the Collegiate Glee Club from eight-thirty to nine-thirty. "This will shorten your study hours," said she, "but was made necessary by some arrangements of your leader. I am sorry that it will interfere with some social matters about which I was asked, but they can be held just as well on tomorrow night, and the glee club meeting tonight is important."

Not a glance was exchanged among our girls, and it was the prospective hostesses that came to them, expressing their regrets at having their plans upset. Not a word of extending the invitations until the next night.

"There won't be any feasts until they celebrate with the people who accept their invitations," said Isabel later.

"I'm so relieved!" exclaimed Cathalina. "Some-way, I hate anything uncomfortable, and they all have been so kind. So far as I am concerned, I think it's very good of them to want me, and if we can get through this time without offending any of the girs I think it is much better."

“One thing was funny about it,” said Isabel, “Miss Randolph’s saying that the ‘social affairs’ could be held just as well tomorrow night. Little did she realize the importance of having them the night before the invitations came out.”

CHAPTER VII

DECISIONS AND LETTERS

THE Glee Club practice was a great success. Voices had been "tried out" previously, and the girls whose singing was up to the requirement were happy, beginning to look forward to the trips which they hoped to have.

"Personally," said Hilary, "I think that the trip to Grant Academy is a myth. There hasn't been any since I've been here, and I haven't any idea that Miss Randolph will let us go. Of course, we could give a little entertainment at one of the churches in Greycliff Village."

"I forgot to tell you what Miss Randolph said to me," said Cathalina. "I went in to see if she thought I'd better go into the Glee Club, and she said she thought I'd enjoy it. I asked her if we were to have any trips and she smiled as if she had been asked that before! Then she said that she thought we should have a big concert here and invite the academy boys and teachers over, also the Greycliff Village people. We'd charge a small admission fee."

"I thought that she wouldn't want us to go there," said Betty.

"Why not?" asked Avalon.

"Oh, just the idea of girls going to give an entertainment in a boys' school. But we are going to the military reception, I guess. That is different. We are their guests and will be chaperoned properly by our dear teachers, you know."

"I can't see the difference," said Avalon. "We'd be chaperoned all right if we gave our entertainment."

"Surely we would. Oh, I don't know why it is different, but it is."

Society lines were forgotten as the notes of the first chorus filled the chapel where they practiced this time. The sopranos reached their high notes successfully, and the altos came in at the proper place. Opponents in the Emerson and Whittier societies sang peacefully from the same sheet of music. And on the morrow there were delivered to sundry suites and various individuals the senior society invitations!

The girls were almost afraid to inquire about whether their friends had received invitations or not. There was little said publicly, but much discussion in private in regard to what action to take, and on the part of those who had received two invitations, which of the two rival societies to choose.

There was a solemn conclave in the suite where

Cathalina sat considering, with two invitations on her lap, and the other suite-mates, similarly engaged, were in different parts of the room. Hilary was in the window seat looking out of the window and was just remarking that she did not want to decide finally till she heard about some of the other girls, when Eloise came in and said, "What are you girls going to do about the societies?"

"Just thinking it over, Eloise," replied Lilian. "What invitations did you girls receive?"

"Helen and I got both of them, but Pauline and Juliet only had invitations from the Whittiers. It was funny, because they invited us all to their party, you know."

"You never can tell why girls do things, or don't do 'em," remarked Betty.

"Why, Betty, how can you so malign your sex!"

"*'Varium et mutabile semper femina,'*" quoted Hilary. "But Vergil must have had some unfortunate love affair if he thought woman a 'fickle and changeable thing.'"

"Women do change their minds," said Betty, "but that is much better when you find you were wrong than to stick to your old first opinion, right or wrong. Mother had a funny experience with a dentist who wanted to pull a tooth which she wanted to save. She had him almost persuaded, she thought, but he said, 'You wouldn't want me to go back on what I said I wouldn't do, would you?' 'Not for the world,'

said she, and went to another dentist who saved the tooth all right."

"Do you consider him an example of his sex?" said Lilian with a laugh.

"No, not really, I guess. Still, I don't know but you'd find as many stubborn men as fickle women."

"I don't think you can put them all in a class like that," observed Eloise. "I know stubborn girls and fickle boys."

"Let's hurry up and decide on the society affairs, and leave our wise considerations about the human race till another time."

"All right, Hilary," said Betty. "Do you know, Eloise, about Evelyn and Diane?"

"Helen has just gone down to see what happened there. I think she'll be back in a minute."

"All of us were invited by the Whittiers," said Hilary. "I like them best, anyhow."

"There's Helen now, I think," said Eloise. "Come in."

Helen and Diane entered. "Having a debate?" asked Diane.

"Not much of a debate. We were wondering how it was with your suite."

"The funniest thing—Dorothy and Jane are invited by the Emersons and not by the Whittiers, and Evelyn and I by the Whittiers and not by the Emersons. So that splits us up."

"Again I remark that we all are invited by the

Whittiers, and that I like them the best," said Hilary.

"The respective merits of the two societies do not seem to have much to do with our decision, do they?" contributed Lilian.

"No, Lilian," replied Hilary, "for the very good reason that both societies do good work in a literary way, have good programs and work hard on the annual debate. I always thought that the Whittiers have a more solid class of girls as a rule. The Emersons take in a lot of social butterflies——"

"Be careful how you say 'butterflies,' Hilary. Remember the Psyche Club!"

"That's a different kind of butterfly, Betty. But I was going to say that they have a larger number always and probably average up with as much real talent. So the main thing to me is to be with you girls. If there is any rivalry, I want to be on the same side as the rest of you."

"We'll get along all right with Dorothy and Jane—we'll just leave society discussions out!"

"Oh, yes, Diane; it isn't so terribly important, after all."

The girls of the two suites, then, with Diane and Evelyn, were among those who decided on the Whittier Society. Their acceptances were received with great joy, there was much coming and going of senior collegiate girls, and great plans were made for the initiation. It was all very different from the starting of the Shakespearean Society in the academy the

year before. Now they were among the older girls of the school, intimates of the senior collegiates, putting up their hair and wearing the same styles! And on the day of the society decision, Cathalina received two interesting letters, one on the Grant Academy stationery and the other, big and fat, inscribed in a dashing masculine hand. They came on the afternoon mail, which the girls received too late to read before they made ready for dinner, and after that meal there was great silence and reading of letters in the suite.

"If I had known what mail awaited little me," said Cathalina, "I would not have been able to stay away so long before dinner."

"But we had such a good time on the beach," said Betty, opening her second letter. "I'm dying to know from whom that fattest letter came."

"So am I," added Lilian, mischievously. "I don't seem to recognize the handwriting."

Cathalina's mouth curved into a smile as she read on. "Don't worry, I'll tell you," said she. "There is no secret. I didn't recognize the writing, either, though *I've* seen it often enough."

"I know who it is, then," said Betty—"Bob Paget, because he would write to Phil."

"Go to the head, Betty. It's Bob; such a nice, friendly letter! And he is telling me all about their doings at college, things I can't pry out of Phil!"

"Isn't it funny about brothers?" remarked Betty, not expecting a reply.

"They won't take time to write you in detail," said Lilian, "and when you are with them at home it is old to them. But we used to hear some good tales from Dick."

"Yes, we do, too," acknowledged Cathalina, "but Phil never took the pains to write me a long letter like this."

"Of course not," said Betty. "But look at that long one that Lilian has. *I'm* perfectly sure that it is from Mr. Philip Van Buskirk, Junior."

Lilian began on another sheet, putting out her hand in protest at Betty.

"Shh-sh, girls," immediately said Betty; "it's getting serious. She can't be interrupted!"

"You crazy Betty," exclaimed Lilian, turning a laughing face on the girls. "Hilary, come to the rescue!" But Hilary was deep in a letter of her own and looked up upon hearing her name with such a dazed expression that Cathalina and Betty were all the more amused.

"Can't you see, Lilian, that Hilary doesn't even know what we are talking about. She is back on the shores of the blue Kennebec with Campbell. Probably the boys all decided to get their letters written up and went at it at the same time."

"That was it," said Cathalina. "I can just see Bob coming in and hear him say, 'Writing letters

to the girls, boys? *I'll* have to write to poor Cathalina.' ”

“That is a very fine theory, Miss Van Buskirk!” said Betty, opening a letter from home.

“Wait till you get a letter from Donald,” said Cathalina. “Then we’ll see what remarks the rest of us can make.”

“All right,” said Betty. “Have you opened your letter from the academy?”

Then Cathalina did blush a little, having hoped that the note from Captain Van Horne would escape comment. “Not yet,” she said.

“I’m horrid,” said Betty, repentantly. “It isn’t even polite to make such personal remarks. My good spirits do carry me away!”

“You’re forgiven,” said Cathalina, “on condition that you let us read on in peace.”

Silence descended on the room for a space. Then Lilian rose and went into the bedroom which she shared with Hilary. Betty remarked that she was going to hunt up Diane and left. Cathalina asked Hilary if she would like to read “Bob’s letter,” and passed it over. Hilary read and commented. “He writes a good letter, doesn’t he? It is full of fun, but very well expressed. I like Robert Paget. Did you ever wonder whether he were not related to Helen?”

“I never even thought of the names being the same. Isn’t that just like me?”

"I hadn't thought of it till I got back to school and saw Helen again. But I have forgotten to ask her."

"They are not from the same place, but are both from the South and might easily be cousins. Helen hasn't any brother, I think. I never heard her mention one, at least; but I pay so little attention sometimes to family relations that she might have half a dozen relatives that I wouldn't know about."

"My letter was from Campbell," said Hilary. "The college news in it is about covered by the news in this of Bob's. Shall I let Lilian read Bob's letter?" Lilian had just come out to join them, after reading Philip's letter once more all by herself!

"Oh, this is a lovely letter. Phil's news was about the same, but he had heard from my brother and was rejoicing, very kindly, about the North decision to go to New York."

"Really, Lilian?" asked Cathalina, in delight.

"Yes, I just read more about it in Mother's letter. I can't believe it! But Mother says that Father has actually decided to leave the old town. It is largely on Dick's account. Father and Dick will go into the firm with Father's old friend. That means an established law business, of course."

"When will they go?"

"Mother says that Father wants to hurry it up now, after waiting so many years, and she has no peace about taking their time to go over everything

from attic to cellar, as she wants to do. Father says 'make a clearance,' and she has already begun on the attic, where there is everything stored, from Dick's cradle and my high chair to stacks of all the magazines from the year One."

The girls were listening with great interest, Cathalina especially delighted at the thought of having Lilian in New York. "Think of it, Lil! You can have all kinds of music lessons and hear the things you like and we can be together so much. I wish you were coming to New York, too, Hilary."

But Hilary was not feeling left out. She always rejoiced in the good fortune of others. Besides, wasn't Campbell in Cathalina's family? This last letter of a young man who was at least a very firm friend. "No telling," said she. "Remember that I'm the daughter of a minister, and there isn't any telling where we may go!"

"What else did your mother say?" asked Cathalina of Lilian.

"Not much more about New York, only that she hoped they could find comfortable quarters without much trouble. Poor Mother! I ought to be home to help look over things with her. But she will hire plenty of help for the hard work. She says that Father wants to be settled in New York by Christmas. I don't know what to think of that. I'm crazy to go to live there, but I didn't expect not to be able to say goodbye to the folks in the old town."

"Goodbyes are awful," said Cathalina. "You can visit them. Why, this just takes my breath with joy. Come on, let's go and celebrate and tell the girls or something. The bell hasn't rung for study hours."

"Oh, it won't be time for that for a long while," said Hilary. "Wait till I see if there's anybody in the other suite, and if they are out we'll go and hunt up Betty and Diane."

There was no one at home in the suite mentioned. Hilary, Lilian and Cathalina flew down the stairs and out upon the broad stones of the big porch. "I see them," said Hilary, "walking up toward the little wood, look."

Diane, Evelyn, Betty and Helen were together. "Hoo-hoo!" called Hilary, and the girls stopped. "We want to tell you the latest news," said Cathalina, a little out of breath. "The Norths are going to move to New York, and I've just been wondering, too, Helen, if one of the friends that my brother brings home once in a while is not related to you. He lives in Richmond and his name is Robert Paget. I don't know why I was so stupid not to connect the names before."

"Bob Paget of Richmond? Well, I should think we are related, only first cousins!"

"Good. You should have been at our house party. I wanted to have all you other girls that were at camp as it was, but the automobile trip and the size

of the car limited it this time. We'll have another one."

"You need not make any apologies, Cathalina. We all understood how it was. I haven't seen anything of Robert for some time, but they say that he is quite a fine fellow."

"I had such a bright letter from him today. He is at college with my brother and cousin, you know, and is a great chum of my brother's. And here we are just finding it out! I'll let you read the letter when we go back."

"All right, I'd love to see it. By the way, when do you suppose the societies will have their initiations?"

"Very soon; next Friday, I think. I don't know what they do, but the collegiates always seemed to have so much fun over it, and the girls would never tell what happened."

CHAPTER VIII

THE MILITARY RECEPTION

"ARE you going with Donald Hilton, Betty?"

"Yes, Cathalina. I can guess whom you are going with—Captain Van Horne."

"Yes, I am. What shall we wear?"

"Our very 'spuzziest' clothes, they say, white kid gloves and all. The boys and officers will be immaculate. And there is to be a fancy drill and a prize drill, too, and the most wonderful supper ever. Dorothy told me, and Jack told her."

"I saw Harry Mills and Jack Appleton with the girls the other day. It was Sunday at dinner, wasn't it?"

"I think so. Jack has asked Hilary, and Henry has asked Lilian. Juliet is going with Lieutenant Maxwell."

"That funny, jolly instructor?"

"Yes, the one you were with at the ice carnival. You haven't forgotten him, I hope."

"Oh, no. What do you think, Betty? You know that Captain Van Horne was here the other evening?"

"Yes."

“Well, he was talking away just as dignified as could be, and had just asked me if he might have ‘the pleasure of my company’ for the military reception, and then he laughed and said that Lieutenant Maxwell was going to arrange to take me and that he—Captain Van Horne—told him to get somebody else! Then he said in a most persuasive way, ‘Do you mind very much?’”

“And did you tell him, ‘Oh, no, I’d far rather be with you, my love?’”

“Scarcely. I said, ‘I think it is very kind of you to invite me, and I am perfectly satisfied with my escort,’ and then went right on with some reference to our visit in New York.”

“You know they do invite the girls they like, but it isn’t altogether arranged for that reason. Only the collegiate girls and the senior academy girls can go, so they fix up the lists some way. I’m so glad they are having one this year. I just love dress parades and drills and things.”

“Oh, yes; I was asking Captain Van Horne about Captain Holley, if the boys liked him, and what sort of a man he is, and Captain Van Horne said that he is all right so far as he knows, and said that he asked him to arrange for you to go with him—it seems that Captain Van Horne had something to do with the lists, but Donald Hilton was ahead of him.”

“Saved again!” exclaimed Betty. “I can’t tell you how I hate to be with him!”

"He is one of the handsomest men at the school, too."

"That doesn't make any difference. I know there is something wrong with him, for all his handsome face."

"I don't believe you ought to say that, Betty, but he is certainly different, and it is natural that we shouldn't have much confidence in him, knowing about his family as we do. I was so surprised to see Louise back this year. I wonder how it happened. But I would not dare ask Miss Randolph. Your meeting with the distinguished Rudolph was so romantic!"

"I hope I don't have any more like it. And, besides, it was not half so romantic as my meeting with Donald. Did I tell you that I had a letter from Lawrence Haverhill this morning? Wait till I get it."

"I am surprised at the way the boys are writing to us. I had another letter from Bob, too. Here it is. You remember when we all said 'yes, we'd write,' when the boys all asked us together. But I never thought they really would—though I did think that Lawrence Haverhill was interested in you, Betty."

"I don't think he is, but I remember how surprised Robert Paget was to find you so grown up, and how he looked at you so much. Didn't you say that either he hadn't visited Phil for a year or two, or that you happened to be away?"

"Yes. I was not there when Bob was."

"Life is getting very interesting, isn't it?"

"Yes, but I hope that it will not also become too complicated for comfort. I am no flirt and I am content with one nice man to take me around."

"I think we have no need to worry yet. I liked all the boys at your house, and I'm having a fine time here."

"There must be something in that Hallowe'en superstition!"

"My, but I was scared when I saw Donald's face in the mirror!"

"Do the gentlemen come for us for the reception?" asked Cathalina.

"Oh, no. They couldn't. They have so many things to get ready, and there's the drill, you know. We'll be taken there, and when we get our wraps off and all our little locks in place we'll go down to the big reception hall and the officers and cadets will be there in all their glory. Dorothy told me all about how they do."

"It will be different from any party or reception I ever attended."

"Yes, just imagine how the old colonel—the commandant—will look in his uniform. He is a real officer in the United States army, Donald said, and he looks a general at least."

Miss Randolph confided to Miss West that she would be glad when the military reception was over,

for the girls could not think of much else. Lessons did not suffer much, but in hours of recreation there was scarcely any other topic of conversation. To tell the truth, even Miss Randolph had a new gown for the occasion. She could not be too much of a contrast to the uniformed commandant she said, by way of excuse.

Cathalina's school clothes had been very simple, but now her mother was permitting her to have a few very beautiful frocks, not made in any extreme style, but of exquisite material and suited to the pretty young woman which Cathalina was becoming. For the Greycliff girls were growing up. At times they seemed like little school girls together. Again they were interested young women, ambitious for the different lines of study in which they were engaged. Both Betty and Cathalina were taking a course in designing. Lilian was working hard at her violin, keeping up the voice lessons, but being careful not to sing too much nor strain the young voice. Hilary was earnestly preparing herself for university life and further study beyond, she hoped. Yet, at this age, no very definite future was shaped for any of them. The mysterious Prince Charming was a shadowy possibility, and not so shadowy of late in some cases.

At last the military reception was at hand. Silken frocks and sashes, shining slippers and dainty fans were in evidence. "Are you going to put on your

white kid gloves now?" asked Cathalina, beginning to gather up her lace handkerchief, fan and other small appurtenances as the time to leave Greycliff Hall approached.

"Mercy, no," replied Betty. "They would all be soiled before we got there. We'll put them on just before we go down stairs at the school. I'm slipping on these dark ones and will leave them in the pocket of my coat. What do you think, Hilary—can't we wear our slippers, or shall we take our slipper bags?"

"The weather is all right and we are going to ride every step of the way, after we once get in the 'bus. I'm not going to bother with mine. My, but your evening coat is pretty, Cathalina. You have every little perfection in your toilet. Did you hear Isabel's story?"

"No. I heard her chatting to you as you dressed, though."

"Louise Holley came in and asked Olivia if she had any white kid gloves. Olivia said 'Yes,' and when Louise asked if she could borrow them, Olivia brought them out and was going to give them to her, thought she had to. You know what a generous soul she is."

"I do, indeed."

"Well, just then Isabel and Virginia came in, while Olivia was getting the gloves out and Isabel said, 'What are you going to do with your gloves, Olivia?' Isabel said that it was none of her affair,

of course, but she had a feeling that Louise was borrowing them. So when Olivia said that Louise wanted them, Isabel spoke up and asked Louise where her own were. Louise tossed her head and said that they were not as clean as they ought to be for this reception. Then Isabel 'braced up,' she said, and asked Louise what Olivia's were going to look like when she had worn them all evening. 'Olivia's have never been worn, and I think anybody who asks to borrow a new pair of white kid gloves has her nerve!' Can't you hear Isabel say that? But Isabel was about ready to cry when she first came in. Louise 'gets on her nerves' anyway, she says."

"What did Louise do?"

"Was terribly angry, of course, and flounced out. Olivia cried and Isabel cried, and then came in to see us and get consoled. She said that she would apologize to Louise for the way in which she did it, if she only could be sorry for what she had done."

"Let's notice what Louise has on. I'll wager she gets a pair from somebody else," said Betty.

The ride was full of joyful anticipations and lively chatter. They drove into the grounds and up to the main building of the academy in style and were met by a detachment of cadets, who helped them out of the 'buses and escorted them into the building, giving them into the care of the matron, and several maids imported for the occasion. Betty looked for Donald, as several girls did for some par-

ticular cadet, but saw nothing of him, though Harry Mills was one of the welcoming party. Girls and teachers were taken upstairs, where a large room had been turned into a dressing room. The girls took their time, as girls do, to lay aside their wraps, fix their hair and arrange their collars or ribbons to their satisfaction. In those pre-war days, happily, there was no rouge nor lip-stick fashion to be forbidden by Miss Randolph. She stood, casually enough, near the foot of the stairs as the girls came down, but with a keen glance inspected each one to see that she looked like the lady she should be.

The commandant stood in the door of the reception room, waited till the last girl of the flock had come down the stairs and Miss Randolph turned, then came forward with outstretched hand to greet Miss Randolph, to meet the girls, and in turn to present them to a receiving group of officers which waited near. Then the cadets and other officers or instructors came up to meet the girls whom they knew, and take charge of their particular ladies. What perfectly creased and spotless uniforms there were! How the buttons and gilt braid shone, and how delightful were the erect bearing and courteous manners!

Betty was almost the last one of the girls left by Miss Randolph when Captain Van Horne, who had found Cathalina a few minutes before, came back, consulted with the commandant, said a few words

to Miss Randolph which Betty did not catch, and offered Betty his arm. "Miss Barnes, if I may, I will take you over with Miss Van Buskirk and myself. Corporal Hilton is unavoidably detained on duty for a short time and asked me to make his excuses."

Betty was quite surprised at this, but gracefully accepted Captain Van Horne's arm and joined Cathalina, who was waiting with a group of the girls and cadets. She noticed Captain Holley's look of interest and bowed as she caught his eye. She felt a little awkward, in spite of Captain Van Horne's efforts to put her at ease, and the pleasant attentions of the other young people around her. Lieutenant Maxwell's remarks kept them all merry, as they enjoyed this short social time before the drills. How jolly and young Miss Randolph and the commandant seemed, but of course they were terribly old—almost fifty at least!

Betty was standing now near the broad window that looked out upon the academy campus, and noticed that Captain Holley was edging over in her direction. He had his sister with him and presently they joined her, Captain Holley standing so that she was temporarily shut off from Cathalina and the rest of that group. "I wonder," said Captain Holley presently, "if we are going to have rain. I thought it looked cloudy a while ago."

"Mercy, I hope not," returned Louise; "we girls

all wore our slippers and brought no other shoes."

"We could get you safely into the 'buses without your getting your feet wet," said Captain Holley.

"I'd like to know how, Rudolph," said his sister.

"Carry you!"

"Why, it promised to be moonlight as we drove over," said Betty, and she drew back the curtain to peer out. Who was that? A forlorn, lone figure marched up the walk and turned to go back. Betty grasped the situation in a moment. It was Donald. Something had happened, and Donald had been put under discipline, and Captain Holley wanted her to see it. That was no guard marching up and down. This flashed through her mind like a flash, as she dropped the curtain, and with perfect self-control, though with flushing cheeks, turned toward Louise and began to flirt her fan carelessly in her hands. "Oh, well, Louise, if it does cloud up, what is the difference? The great military reception will be over. You have no idea, Captain Holley, how we girls have looked forward to this night, with the drills, the fun and the unusual atmosphere of military surroundings. It is all so—quaint!"

"Quaint, is it? That is good. And will there be no regrets?"

"Possibly, but if one is good and *kind*, there ought to be no regrets."

"I am wondering what has become of your escort, Miss Betty."

"Yes, you must be. I am told that he is detained. It is unfortunate for me, is it not?"

"It is very unfortunate for him. Will you not join Louise and me to watch the drills Captain Van Horne has the young lady he invited with him."

"Cathalina will not mind, and I am supposed to be with them, thank you, Captain Holley. But I appreciate your kindness" (at its true worth, she thought).

"Let me just speak to the commandant and Miss Randolph," said Captain Holley quickly, and before Betty could protest he had hurried over to the commandant. What could she do? Nothing, she decided. Let the fates do what they would, then. With Louise on her hands, she could not explain the situation to Cathalina and Captain Van Horne. By the smiling appearance of everybody concerned at the other end of the room, she judged that the determined Rudolph was having his way. "All right, sir, I shall play up and play the game," she thought.

Captain Holley returned with a pleased smile on his handsome face. He spoke a moment to Captain Van Horne, who bowed, smiled at Betty and moved away from the group with Cathalina. Betty felt deserted, but turned with her most charming manner to Captain Holley and his sister, saying, "Now this is kind of you. Tell me about everything, Captain Holley. Who is to take part and what is to be done?" It seemed a very long time since they had arrived,

yet it was probably not more than half an hour. Surely Donald was not to be absent the whole evening or they would have told her. The drills would begin pretty soon.

In a few minutes the commandant made an announcement, which Betty heard as if in a dream, and the ladies all were escorted over to seats in the big gymnasium, where the drills were to take place. Captain Holley most gallantly took Betty and his sister along the concrete walks. He was fascinating when he tried to be. The cadets all yielded place to the officers and their ladies, who were seated in the best places. Then the band marched in, after what seemed to Betty like a long time of waiting.

But Betty now could not help enjoying the scene before her, Donald or no Donald. The bright lights, the music, the marching companies of erect figures in their attractive uniforms, as the drill began, put a thrill in all the spectators. Betty had recovered from her embarrassment. After all, it was, perhaps, only kindness that made Captain Holley take her under his wing. Perhaps he only took pains to show her Donald at his punishment because she would understand the situation better. Well, what was the use of wondering about it? Here was a fine entertainment before her eyes. Why not enjoy it? And now Betty was one of the few to have a bright young officer explaining things to her. Many of the cadets were taking part in the drill and some of the in-

structor officers. Louise was more interesting and happier than she had ever seen her, and seemed to be both fond and proud of her brother. To her Captain Holley showed a superior elder brother sort of affection, but to Betty his manner was that poised manner of especial interest which is so flattering and attractive to a young girl. But who was that just marching in? Was that Donald? In the different uniform she could scarcely recognize him, but it must be he. Yes, it was. Considerably flushed, Corporal Hilton was taking his part in the fancy drill.

CHAPTER IX

APPOINTMENTS AND DISAPPOINTMENTS

MEANWHILE, the other girls in Betty's "quartette" were having no such harrowing experiences. Cathalina was having a better talk with her friend, Captain Van Horne, than had been possible when they were together in New York. During the introductory half hour in the parlors they had been with a group of the young friends. But there was the walk in the moonlight together to the gymnasium, and seats there apart from their more intimate friends, as it happened.

"Has any one told you," asked Cathalina, "that the Norths are moving to New York?"

"No, Miss Van Buskirk, but Richard North gave me a hint of it when we had some conversation at your home one evening. He has a fine opportunity, going in with that firm of experienced lawyers."

"How are you getting on with your studies?"

"I have little time that I can call my own here, of course, but am accomplishing a little. I am more familiar with the work here than I was last year, and like the boys. We have a good class of fellows

in this school. The commandant is strict, but rather human, on the whole, and just. The boys all have confidence in him. His discipline stands back of the instructors, too, and we feel that we shall be supported in anything that is fair and square."

"That must help, of course," said Cathalina thoughtfully. "I don't know the first thing about discipline. Whatever goes on at Greycliff most of us girls know nothing about."

"Military discipline is a good thing for boys."

"Yes. Father says that it is the finest kind of 'athletics,' too, for they don't shuffle and swing themselves around, but get the habit fixed of the erect carriage that is so splendid." Cathalina was enthusiastic now. "Oh, there they come!" Like Betty and the rest of the girls, Cathalina felt the quickening of interest and the inspiration which came with the music and the marching feet. "Don't they look fine! Help me pick out the ones we know, Captain Van Horne. Wasn't that Donald Hilton? I wonder where Betty is?"

"Over there with Captain Holley and his sister."

"I see. Poor Betty."

"Why 'poor'?"

"She doesn't like him."

"She is laughing and seems to be having a good time."

"Oh, she would. Besides, you would have a good time with anybody here."

Captain Van Horne gave her an amused glance, lifting his brows as if to inquire if it made no difference to her with whom she came.

Cathalina caught his glance, understood it, and added with a smile, "But it is very much nicer to be with congenial company!"

"Have I ever told you how much I appreciated your being so good to me last summer?"

"Why, yes, you made the most pleasant of remarks whenever you left our little circle."

"But it was more than just the ordinary appreciation of courtesy, Miss Van Buskirk. It was like heaven out at your place to a fellow who was staying in a hot room in town and studying and working away as I was. And to get out there, and eat ambrosia with a bevy of goddesses, was, indeed, to visit Olympus, especially when the chief goddess was as kind as you."

"You are very flattering, Captain Van Horne. I think I never was called a goddess before," said Cathalina, laughing. "I wanted to have a better visit with you myself, but I was hostess, you know, and had so many folks to look after."

"I knew that, but I never could refuse any of your invitations."

"We wanted you to be there as much as possible. At a house party, you know, one has to put a good deal in a short time. I hope we did not take too much of your time."

"No, indeed; I just existed till the next time. I think I was out at your place every day while you were there, either for dinner, a party or a call!"

"Well, you had to make your party calls, didn't you?"

"That is the explanation, of course. How cleverly you put it. May I make a 'party call' after this?"

"Since I can't, you will have to," assented Cathalina, in pleased amusement.

Part of this conversation was going on while the band was playing, and the young captain had to lean over to talk into Cathalina's ear. Then the band stopped and all was quiet while the fancy drill was carried to completion. How the girls applauded! The band played again, and then the competitive drills were announced. It made it all the more interesting that the girls knew so many of those who were taking part. Donald Hilton, Harry Mills and Jack Appleton were in the same company, A Company, that won the first prize in the competitive drill.

"What next?" asked Cathalina.

"The 'banquet,'" replied her escort. "The commandant will announce it or have some one of the officers do so. Then the boys who have been drilling will come for their ladies and we shall go."

But when the prizes were announced, another list was read, of those boys whose rank was advanced. And Donald's name was not among them.

As the cadets came in the main room, after the

ranks were broken, there was one who did not know where to look for his fair lady. A trifle embarrassed, but manly, not knowing just how Betty would take this peculiar reception, anxious to explain, Donald Hilton came toward the visitors' seats and stood a moment to look for Betty. As people were rising, collecting light wraps, chatting as they left, it was not easy to find her in the confusion. But Betty had seen Donald and intended to wait, and in a moment Donald had seen her and was making his way toward her. He saluted Captain Holley, very courteously, apologized to Betty for his delay in meeting her, and asked if she were ready to go to supper with him.

"Thank you, Captain Holley, for taking me under your wing," said Betty, more warmly than she had ever supposed she would, and with a smile to Louise, who had been so unusually cordial, she joined Donald in the departing procession.

"I can't tell you, Miss Betty," said Donald, "how mortified I am over this affair. I don't know what you must think of me. Did anybody tell you anything?"

Betty stated demurely what she had been told on her arrival.

"If I could just explode or something!" exclaimed Donald.

Betty laughed, and, sorry for Donald's distress, she said: "I don't care, Donald. I can't think that

you would really intend to embarrass me, so I'll forgive you before you explain."

"Thank you, Betty," said Donald, dropping the "Miss" this time. You're an angel. I always knew it. But I have a lot to tell you about this. If I don't get a chance to do it tonight, may I come over as soon as I can get off and tell you all about it?"

"You certainly may."

"All right; I feel better. No telling how soon that will be, though, if I should be put on probation."

"Is it as bad as that?"

"I shouldn't be surprised. But, Betty, I wouldn't ever have run any risk of seeming to show any disrespect to you."

"I am sure of it."

"There I was, pacing up and down, like a tiger in his cage, and wondering how you were taking it and how on earth the thing came about. I'd had a few demerits—black marks, you know. It's easy enough to get 'em. But either somebody's set it up, or the kid cadets have just taken a bad time to take it out on me for some of the jokes our crowd has played on them. They don't stand for much hazing here, and it's little enough in that line that any of them had. I can't think of but one that ever seemed to resent the jokes. But inspection has been a nightmare for two days now, and my black marks have piled up. Yesterday morning, Betty, I had cleaned my gun, but when at the last minute I got it for drill, there

was a lot of black grease on it. Of course I was bawled out. And this morning, worst of all, there was a package of cigarettes found in my room when it was inspected. I have been trying to think that all out, too. I had gotten word that Van Horne wanted to see me, can't even think what kid it was that told me. Somebody just called in the door, you know. So I started out to hunt up Van Horne and see what he wanted. Meanwhile somebody must have come in to fix up the cigarettes, for the report was that there was a half-smoked cigarette and a lot of ashes under a paper on the table. My bed had been fixed, too, so that it did not pass inspection."

"Did you find Captain Van Horne?"

"Yes. He said that there must have been some mistake. He had not sent for me."

"Then, of course, it was all fixed up to get you in trouble."

"But when I came back to the building I found somebody *had* sent for me, the commandant, of course—and they must have been pretty swift, by the way, to get word to him so soon!"

"I suppose it is against rules for the boys to have cigarettes."

"I should say so! I'm going to find out who put those in my room if it takes me to my dying day."

"Didn't you tell the commandant about it?"

"I tried to, and got reprimanded for it, and told to take my punishment like a man. That was the

first time I ever was mad at the commandant, and I'm going to see that he does know about it some day. But he was fair about tonight. I was to work out part of my punishment and miss the first part of the evening, as you know, but they needed me in the drills, and then the old boy said that he did not also want to punish the young lady I had invited, and I might take her out to supper. What more is hanging over my head I don't know. You heard the list read out. I was due for a higher appointment, but of course could not have it now—am a measly corporal still."

Betty laughed at that. "I don't believe that they will do anything very awful. But I would explain things to the commandant, or to Captain Van Horne, anyway."

"It is going to be easier to explain than to prove what I say. But now you must forget all about it, and if I am forgiven I shall put it out of my mind the rest of the evening, too. What has been going on over at Greycliff? Are you going to skate this winter?"

"Oh, yes, I always skate; but I think that the great sport this winter is going to be the skiing, by the way the girls are talking now. But there is much on hand before that time comes."

"I don't know. They say the cold weather will begin early this year."

By this time they had reached the dining room,

where white tables, flowers, music and savory odors greeted them. A little orchestra from Greycliff Heights, or Greycliff Village, as the girls usually called it, played during the meal. This was as great an event to the young people as the ice carnival of the year before.

Most of the company had found their places at table by the time Betty and Donald entered the dining room. They had not hurried, merely keeping in sight the others who were ahead of them, while a few lingered behind them. Part way down the long room they saw a beckoning hand, that of Harry Mills, who was with Lilian, Jack Appleton and Hilary, and was trying to indicate that their place cards were at that table. Betty and Donald hurried on to join them, and found a table of gay young cadets and their guests. The place cards all had the picture of a tent and Uncle Sam in front of it, welcoming a charming maiden, who represented Greycliff and was receiving the roses which he offered. There was a rose at each place, as well, and a silver pin, suitable for a corsage bouquet, for each of the girls. The bouquets had been sent to Greycliff, but these pins were reserved for the evening's souvenir. They each bore the academy "arms" and seal. "Such a beautiful souvenir!" exclaimed Betty to Donald. "I shall always keep it in memory of a very happy evening."

"That is very good of you to say," replied Donald.

"It is happy to me, too, since everything is all right with you."

Late as it was when the girls arrived at Greycliff, Cathalina and Betty were both too excited to sleep. Betty had too much to think over and Cathalina wanted to hear all Betty's news. But they dutifully put lights out, and each lying in her little cot, related the most outstanding events of the evening.

"Did Louise have on fresh gloves, Betty?"

"Why, yes, she did. I never thought of it, though. Yes, I remember how snug they were, probably a bit too small, but just as clean as could be."

"Maybe they were her own, after all."

"Perhaps, and perhaps she succeeded in getting some one to lend them to her. But she was just lovely all the time we were together. And I liked Captain Holley better than I ever did before. I thought he was terribly officious at first, but it was very nice to have somebody to be really attentive till Donald came. Only I don't think it was very kind of him to have me look out and see the poor boy!"

"You remember he wanted to have you for his own guest, and perhaps he felt a little put out about Donald's getting ahead of him again."

"I wonder! Cathalina, do you think he would go to the trouble to fix up things that way for Donald, so perhaps he would miss the reception?"

"Oh, no. That would be so trifling a thing for an officer to do. I can't imagine it."

"He has done some awfully funny things, though. There was the time he met his sister outside of the hall."

"He explained that pretty well—at the time."

"Yes, I suppose so. Then what was he doing with those queer men at the cave?"

"That *is* strange. But we ought to be careful not to say much, unless we feel pretty sure something was wrong."

"You know how careful we have been. But I can't help wondering sometimes. If he has been at the bottom of that trouble of Donald's!"

"It would be pretty hard to connect him with it!" finished Cathalina. "But I do hope that Donald will find out who put those things in his room and who called him away. I imagine that it was some of those cadets revenging themselves a little, don't you?"

"That is the most likely explanation."

CHAPTER X

HEROIC VIRGINIA

THE military reception was soon a thing of the past. Other events were being looked forward to with varying degrees of interest. The days were speeding on toward Christmas and its vacation. There had been the usual Hallowe'en party, without special adventure this time for Betty or the other girls. Every day at Greycliff was an adventure of some sort, Hilary declared. Where so many girls were together, under one roof, there was always something interesting on foot. Their hard work on lessons and the affairs of the different organizations had its spice or reward in the friendships and visiting, the parties and fun that came in between class work and study.

The new *Greycliff* had been duly initiated early in the term by a series of picnics. No storm had disturbed the beauty or safety of the trips. The girls had renewed acquaintance with all the natural features of the place that they loved so much. After Christmas there would be skiing and basketball games, the usual skating, when the ice was in con-

dition, swimming in the pool at the "gym," and the continuation of the practices in the musical organizations. That was more pleasure than labor. The literary societies were progressing wonderfully, according to the accounts of their members. The Whittiers were bending every effort to have original or instructive programs and were devoting much time to debate in preparation for the inter-society debate in the spring. The subject for that was under discussion.

Isabel was now president of the academy Shakespearean Society. That fact was enough to insure its regular programs and the appearance of all the members upon them. It was not found best to increase the membership too much, but by the advice of Miss Randolph, two other academy societies were formed, in order to give more students the opportunity of their drill in public performance. It was permissible to use material which had been prepared for English classes or the oratory department. As there was plenty of this, the preparation for society night was not a burden. There were always an "oration" or short address of some sort, a brief debate and musical numbers with readings or some form of entertainment by the "dramatic" members. Isabel flew around to arrange for everything, or to see that the various committees were doing their duty, and her room was a center for the Shakespearean members all week long. Virginia nobly responded to

every cry for assistance from Isabel, and often filled in a place on the program for which some one had failed to prepare. Occasionally, Eloise or Lilian came down from their own society meeting to sing for them.

"You would not believe, girls," said Isabel, "how Virginia Hope has come out. She takes to literature like a duck to water, and you ought to hear her debate. She can think on her feet. If we ever get suffrage, Virgie will go to Congress!" This was before Virginia, who turned to Lilian, saying, "Hold me, Lilian! This is going to my head! I'm not used to this from my room-mate. She usually says, 'Virgie, you'll have to do this—such a pity that Mary can't do it; *she* is so gifted'!"

"I like your beautiful simile, Isabel," said Cathalina. "'She takes to literature like a duck to water.' How forceful, yet brief."

"What else can you expect from a Shakespearean?" inquired Hilary. "And didn't we start that society? The answer is 'We did.' "

"Listen to 'em, Virgie. Of course they'd take the credit for everything we do!"

"As far as I'm concerned," said Virgie, "they may. But I'm thinking that little Isabel is getting her share of credit, too."

"Seriously, Isabel," said Cathalina, "we girls are just pleased to pieces that the society is going so well

this year. 'And you got the very new girls in that are going to help you."

"Sometimes when they say they can't do things, and won't be persuaded, I get awfully discouraged and think I'll resign; and then I think of the Psyche Club crowd and say, 'On to Olympus, aha!'"

"You're killing, fine old Isabel!" and Cathalina gave her a little squeeze. "Isabel's the stuff heroines are made of. We'll line you up with Eloise. And you'll be going to Congress yourself, you're such a fine little debater—though, of course, women will never go there." For in those days, so it seemed.

"Goodbye; we must positively get to work," said Pauline.

"Me, too," said Juliet.

"One more piece of fudge around, girls," said Isabel. "You can't leave all that for just us to finish." The departing girls took a last piece between thumb and finger as they yielded to Isabel's coaxing tones and the appearance of the plate of soft brown squares. The Psyche Club had been having a meeting in the Isabel-Virgie-Avalon-Olivia suite.

"Did you get the mail I put on your dresser, Virgie?" asked Olivia.

"No. I forgot to look," replied Virginia, disappearing into the bedroom, while the other girls got out their books and started on their lessons just as the study bell rang.

"Put down a credit mark for us this time," said

Isabel. "For once we are already at it when the bell rings."

"Don't talk as if we never studied, Miss Hunt. Many's the time outside of study hours that this poor old brain has been busy!"

"Poor Olivia!"

Half an hour later, Isabel woke up to the fact that Virgie had not returned to the study room, but she looked toward the bedroom door, where all was quiet, and resumed her study. Another half hour went by. Isabel thought of Virgie again, and noticed that her books were on the table.

"Why, she isn't studying," thought Isabel. "I wonder if anything is the matter. Perhaps she had bad news in the letter," Isabel tiptoed to the bedroom door and peeped in. Virginia was lying on the bed, her arms thrown up in such a way as to conceal her face. "Virgie," said Isabel, gently, "are you asleep?"

"No," replied Virginia, her tones a bit smoothed; "I'll be out pretty soon, I guess."

Isabel went back to her lessons, convinced now that something was the matter. Avalon looked up from her book. "Anything the matter with Virgie?"

"She's lying down and I guess doesn't want to be disturbed. Maybe she has a headache. I ate too much of that fudge myself." Isabel said to herself: "I don't *know* that anything is the matter, I just guess it, so I hope it's all right to suggest a head-

ache. You can't tell *all* the truth always!" Isabel was too honest not to blame herself for this evasion.

But presently Virginia came out, picked up her books, and began to study. "Got a headache, Virgie?" asked Avalon.

"Yes, a little one," replied Virginia.

That night Isabel heard a repressed sob or two and longed to comfort Virgie and find out what could be the matter. Something had happened at home, she supposed.

For several days Virginia was sober, doing her work as well as usual, but not running in to visit the other girls, and spending a good deal of time by herself. Avalon and Olivia did not appear to notice any difference, but Isabel could tell that Virgie had something on her mind. Finally, Isabel decided that she would speak to her about it, and waited for a good opportunity. This came on the following Sabbath afternoon, when after the late and excellent Sunday dinner the girls had donned their bathrobes and slippers and were lounging in their bedrooms. Isabel was propped up against her pillows and was writing letters. Virginia was stretched out on her bed, apparently asleep, but presently she rose and went to the dresser for a handkerchief. There was a tell-tale redness about her eyes, which Isabel noted in one quick glance, and when Virginia was once more on her bed, her back turned to Isabel, Isabel said softly, "Virgie, I wish you would tell me what

is the matter and let me be of some comfort. You haven't been like yourself for several days and it worries me. Of course, if there is any secret, or anything you can't tell me, all right, but I hate to have you feel like this and not say a word to you."

There was silence for a moment, and then Virgie said, "I've been going to tell you, Isabel, but I'm such a baby that I c-cry about it——" Virgie could not go on just then. Isabel waited.

"Maybe it would do you good to cry it out, Virgie. Haven't you been holding it all in for fear the girls would notice? Cry it out for all me," added the sturdy Isabel.

"You 'hate water-works,'" said Virgie, laughing through her tears.

"Sometimes they are a 'necessary evil,'" replied Isabel, with a broad smile.

"I did cry it out one night," said Virgie, "but always when I've started to say anything I'd get choked up. Now that you have spoken about it, though, perhaps I can get through telling you about it."

Isabel's imagination was working, trying to think of what could have happened, when Virgie continued, "You know that letter I got from Father——"

"I supposed it was from him. I saw it lying on the dresser and after you read it you were upset."

"Well, to make a long story short, Father can't

afford to keep me in school any longer and I've got—to go—home!"

"Mercy sakes!" said Isabel, "that is a blow! But it's better than a death in the family."

"Oh, yes; I never even thought of that as a consolation. Of course it's better than losing Father, but sometimes I feel that I can't go back to the ranch with my stepmother there. It isn't that she is a stepmother. I'm not so silly as that. There are lots of good ones, but I guess my father didn't know much about her when he married her and she isn't good for any girl to be with. I'd know better how to meet it now, but it will be hard. Why, I'd rather just wash dishes at Greycliff than go to live with her!"

"Maybe you can."

"Can—what?"

"Wash dishes at Greycliff, or something like it. Don't you see? If it's only money that is the matter, perhaps something can be done."

"Oh, I've thought about that, and I couldn't borrow or accept money from Cathalina or anybody, or have the girls get up a scholarship for me!"

"You're too proud, Virginia Hope, for anybody that really wants to get an education. Why shouldn't people with money help girls that want an education? All these schools raise money for their scholarships that way."

"Oh, well, if it were something that I had earned

by high scholarship, or because people thought I would be a credit to them, or they wanted to take that way of giving money to their school, or getting students for it and helping the 'cause of education'—that would be different, but all the scholarships here are provided for, I guess."

"Greycliff is poor, all right, for all that it is trying to do. When did your father say you would have to go home?"

"I'll just let you read the letter," said Virgie, who began to feel much better already, since she had confided in Isabel. "It's a short one. I know how my father felt when he had to write it."

Isabel perused the letter and sat thoughtfully a few moments, still perched on her bed against the pillows, with her writing materials strewn around her. Virginia sat on the edge of her cot, feeling for the first that there might be hope in Isabel's suggestion.

"Why, say, Virgie, you don't have to go right off!"

"No, it's all paid up till the end of the first semester, so I'll get my grades and standing anyhow, and perhaps some time I can come back."

"Now, listen, Virgie. Your father says that he can send you money at the end of the first semester to take you home and that is all he can do without getting in debt and that he doesn't dare do. Very

sensible. He knows that you are going home with me for Christmas, doesn't he?"

"Yes."

"It takes quite a little money to go clear to North Dakota, doesn't it?"

"Oh, yes; railroad fare is quite a little sum."

"How are you off for clothes?" Isabel was mentally running over Virgie's wardrobe and went on before Virginia had a chance to answer her. "You didn't wear any of your pretty summer dresses that you got before school was out at camp, you know, so you'll hardly need anything unless it's shoes or gloves and the things we need 'pin-money' for. You don't need anything new for winter, do you? It's a good thing that you had to have everything new last year. There is your pretty coat that is good for both everyday and Sunday-go-to-meetin', and your other winter things will last, won't they?"

"I'll make 'em."

"If you can be saving with the money you have on hand, and put the money of the fare toward the next semester's school expenses, I believe you could earn the rest. Of course, there aren't so many ways of earning money here as at some schools, but maybe we can create some. Do you mind if I talk it over with Lilian!"

"I was going to tell the girls pretty soon."

"Let's keep it all in the Psyche Club for the present, and see what our brilliant minds can evolve,

aha!" Then, seeing Virgie's look, she added, "You can count on me not to embarrass you, Virgie, in any way."

"Perhaps, if I stay, I can win one of the prizes this spring, and that would take me home."

"Fine!" said Isabel. "Me 'n' you ought to get the prizes for debate, and whichever one I get I'd lend to you."

"No lending, remember."

"Say, Virgie, I've heard of girls doing mending and other little things for the girls at schools. Would you mind trying something like that?"

"I'd do *anything* to stay here whether I minded it or not!"

"Good for you. Line up in the heroine class, as Cathalina says."

Virgie was laughing by this time, with no traces of tears.

"Wait to write to your father about our plan till we have worked out something 'more definite,' as Dr. Norris says, to tell him. You feel pretty sure he will let you try it, don't you?"

"Oh, yes. I feel guilty to have cost him so much as it is, and it was so grand of him to pay my way at camp last summer."

"My, what a relief it will be to the Psyche Club not to have to do any mending this spring! Honestly, *can* you mend, Virgie?"

"Try me—and don't the girls hate to fix their shoes more than anything else?"

"I know I do."

"All right; wait till I get me a nice brush or two, and the necessary white, brown and black polish, and I'll be ready to hang out my shingle. Isabel, I wish I had talked to you before. I never thought of those little things till you spurred me up to it."

"Let us now join in singing 'Whispering Hope,' and then I'll finish my letters," said Isabel picking up her pen.

"I shall sleep and dream of my business enterprises—it's precious little sleep I've had this week!" and Virgie settled down again. In about five minutes she was sound asleep, a peaceful expression on her face. Isabel wrote awhile; then, when she was sure that Virginia was safely in the land of dreams, she tiptoed out, wrapping her robe tightly about her, while she sped down the hall to the door of the suite she sought. "I hope the girls are not asleep," she thought, and tapped lightly.

Cathalina came to open the door, saying that Lilian and Hilary were asleep, but that she and Betty were longing for social gayety.

"I'm the one to supply that need," said Isabel gayly. "But I want to tell you girls something and ask your advice."

"No secrets," called Lilian from her bedroom. "Hilary and I are both wide awake and listening."

Isabel and Cathalina proceeded to the bedroom door and looked with smiles upon the lazy Hilary and Lilian. Betty appeared from the other bedroom, trailing a bathrobe much too long for her, and they all perched upon the two cots. "You ought to have your mother lengthen your robe for you, Betty," said Isabel.

"Yes. Isn't it a pity about this? I sent my other one to the laundry this summer just before I came here, and it never came back. Hence this, from the Greycliff Emporium. I honestly have intended to make a deeper hem, but I don't know when I could have found the time."

"The Psyche Club is to do no more mending or sewing of rips and tears, or blacking shoes——"

"Mercy, what's the matter?" asked Lilian. "Is Miss Randolph going to import maids for us?"

"No. Listen. You know I told you, Lilian, that I thought something was the matter with Virgie. Well, I found out what it was. Her father has had bad luck or something, and said she would have to go home after this semester. Now I have thought up a wild scheme by which she may earn enough to stay through the second semester. Don't tell me, girls, that it can't be done, because I've got Virgie sleeping the sleep of the just, after a sleepless week, in the hope of being able to stay!"

The girls listened attentively as Isabel gave them the details of the letter and of her talk with Virgie.

“Of course there will be lots of things that will be disagreeable about it, if she does things outside of the Psyche Club, but I believe Virgie has the grit to stick it out, and we can stand by her.”

“Girls do get through doing things like that in other schools,” said Cathalina. “Now I hate to wash out and press my georgette waists, but I sent a darling one to the wash and it came back ruined!”

“But where will Virgie find the time from her lessons for all this?”

“I suspect she will have to give up lots of fun,” said Isabel, ruefully. “I don’t know that I can have a good time when she is working so hard, and she will want to do most of it herself. I can let her off from society duties, except debates, and she needs all the practice she can get in that. We are both working for prizes.”

“Are there any collegiate scholarships established?” asked Cathalina.

“I don’t know. We were talking about scholarships and she wouldn’t want any fixed up just for her, she said.”

“I don’t see why she should feel that way about it. Besides, Father wants to do things for this school and told me to find out what else Miss Randolph wanted. He can make the debate prize bigger anyway.”

“I think that could be done,” said Isabel. “Virgie wouldn’t know anything about it till she got it. If

it would take her home and bring her back it would be better! She thinks she must go home this summer anyway. Her father has not seen her, you know, and she is anxious to know how he really is. He works so hard, she says."

"There's that grand nut candy that you and Virgie make, Isabel," said Lilian. "Why couldn't Virgie sell that to the girls—let them come for it, or have a little sale on Saturday afternoon or evening?"

"That is a fine idea. Would Miss Randolph let her do that?"

"I think so. She lets us do things to raise money for our societies, you know. I don't suppose she would let anybody sell outside stuff, but the little bit of candy we make, or anything else that we do ourselves could be sold, I think. You ask her, Cathalina, will you?"

"Certainly I will."

"And we'll have to find out exactly what Virgie will have to make to pay the rest of the semester's expenses, and get the little things she needs, besides her books and things. Can you find that out, too, Cathalina?"

"I don't see why I can't," said Cathalina with a smile. "And I'm sure if there is any fair way in which Miss Randolph can help Virgie get through, she will."

"But don't forget, Cathalina, that Virgie wants to do it herself."

"If she has time to make enough of that candy and charge a good price for it, I don't think she'll need to do much else. That was the first candy to be 'all gone' at that little society bazaar we had."

"I'll tell you what, Cathalina—you know she is going home with me at Christmas vacation. Well, we'll get ahead and make up a lot of it to sell at the opening of the semester, when everybody has lots of money."

"Isabel is the business woman of the Psyche Club," said Betty.

"And Virginia is going to stay!" said Cathalina firmly.

CHAPTER XI

VIRGINIA GOES HUNT-ING

IT chanced that Virginia had never visited Isabel, though a visit had been planned more than once. All preparation had been made for Virgie to go home with Isabel and then go to camp with her, but it would have made extra railroad fare and there was such a short time between the close of school and the beginning of camp that Virginia gave it up. At the last minute, too, a letter from one of the boys announced that the aunt who kept house for them all was sick in bed. Hence it happened that when the girls talked about Virgie's being with Isabel, they were mistaken. By different routes they had arrived at Merrymeeting at about the same time.

"Bye, Baby Bunting, Virgie's gone a-Hunting," sang Lilian, standing by the 'bus as it started to move off with its load of girls. Lilian and Cathalina were to leave for New York later in the day, taking a sleeper.

Virginia laughed, waved her hand in final salute, and turned to Isabel. "You are Hope-ing, I suppose, Isabel."

“Yes; Hope-ing for a jolly vacation.”

“Do you remember last Christmas at Hilary’s? I am one lucky girl, after all.”

“Christmas at our house won’t be anything like that, Virgie, but I hope that you will have a good time anyway. The boys are lots of fun, and we can do some different things, anyway, from the grind of lessons. It’s a real little town, and everybody knows everybody else. We are called ‘the Hunt boys and Isabel.’ ”

“Never Isabel and the Hunt boys? Nor Isabel Hunt and the boys?”

“Never.”

“I am surprised. I supposed you were more important than that!”

“Not a bit of it. You see, I come in between the boys. This is the order, from the oldest down.” Isabel held up her gloved fingers. “Jim, aged twenty-four; William and Milton, twins, aged twenty; Lou, seventeen; Isabel, sixteen; Norman, thirteen, and Edwin, eleven. Jim is through school and in business with Father now, though he is planning something else, I guess. Slim and Shorty are working their way through college, Lou is in the last year of high school, Norman and Ed in the grades. Norman goes into high school next year. Jim brought us all up.”

“Jim! Where were your father and your aunt?”

“I don’t wonder you exclaimed. But my daddy

had his hands full to get the daily bread for us all, and is easy going on discipline. Auntie is a dear, timid little soul. Some folks think that she is queer, but she is just old-fashioned and afraid of folks. She tried her best on me, but the boys were too much for her, so Jim took hold of the discipline and made us all behave. We knew if he said anything he meant it. Father would forget, and Auntie couldn't make a flea mind, but Jim felt responsible, too. Once when I had been awfully rebellious about Jim's interfering, as I thought, about something I wanted to do dreadfully, I talked it all out to Jim. Can't you just imagine me, mad as could be, telling Jim that I didn't think it was any of his affair and that I knew I could get Father to let me. It was terribly mean of me, for Jim had always petted me especially because I was the girl. Oh, he would tease me and make me do things, but he made a lot over me.

"This time Jim gave up. 'All right, Isabel,' he said, 'if that is the way you feel about it.' Then he sat down in a chair, looking too forlorn, and stared out of the window. I was not expecting any such performance—thought I should be made to behave, as usual. I went out and banged the door, and then I felt so mean over it that I came back in, and there was Jim still sitting in the chair. And I love Jim next to Father, so I went up and peeked around the chair and said, 'What's the matter, Jim?' He just held out his arms and I got in his lap and we made

up, and Jim told me why he did not want me to do this. I listened to him this time, and then he told me that when our mother knew she could not live, when Edwin was a tiny baby, she asked Jim to help Father look after the children, especially me! I was scarcely five and Jim about thirteen then. Think of it! Poor Jim, with six children younger than he was! But then he has a perfectly lovely disposition, and is real jolly, too. I imagine it did not wear on him as much as you might think. I told you how he taught me to swim, didn't I?"

"Yes."

"This time I must have been about ten years old. I told Jim that I was sorry and that I would stand by him. And so I have, especially with the younger boys."

"Which ones do you call Shorty and Slim?"

"Will is Slim, and Milton is Shorty. I'll not describe any of the boys. You'll get them all fixed without much trouble, I think. All the boys have nicknames, but you can get their real names first. I call them by their own names almost altogether now."

"I thought that you had never known your mother at all. But you must have been old enough to remember her."

"It's very hazy. Auntie had me away from home a good deal because my mother was not strong for several years before she died."

“I’m thankful that my mother lived as long as she did, because I would not have been taught anything but what is rough and unkind by my stepmother. I helped my mother with everything and studied with her till she grew too ill. Then I did all the house-work till my father married again. We haven’t a big house, though, and there was only Father except when there were men to help on the ranch. Then we hired somebody to help me.”

“How old were you then?”

“Past fifteen.”

“You seemed like such a little thing last year when you first came.”

“I was sixteen, though, a whole year older than you. I’ve grown a good deal since last year. My clothes all had to be let out and down, you know.”

“I suppose it was because you were so thin, and then your hair was skinned back so tight——”

“And my clothes were so funny.”

“Oh, I wouldn’t say that. But really I am not so far from seventeen now. The ages I gave you were our last birthdays.”

Isabel and Virginia had been talking to each other all the way to Greycliff Village. Now they waked up to their surroundings enough to say goodbye to other girls, received their through tickets from the chaperoning teacher, and waited a short time for the train. This took them west instead of east, and was to land them in the little town at about eleven

o'clock. As Virgie wanted to be as saving as possible, they did not even take a Pullman. "And what was the use?" said Isabel. "We had no need of a sleeper—why go to bed for a few hours? And they always make up the berths about nine or ten o'clock. I'd rather be in the ordinary coach, even if it is for nine or ten hours." This was very good of Isabel, and the girls were so happy that nothing made much difference. Fortified with some magazines and a box of candy, they managed to put in the rest of the day very comfortably, taking their meals in the dining car. The wintry landscape was not unpleasing, and they were almost surprised when they found the end of the journey at hand.

"Who will meet us?" asked Virginia.

"Whoever happens to be at liberty. Probably Jim will come, but it might be Will or Milton, or both."

"Aren't you lucky to have so many brothers to look after you!"

"I believe I am. It's Jim—there he is!"

Virginia glanced out of the window as the train was pulling into the station and the girls were gathering up their bags and magazines. "He looks a little like Isabel," she thought, "but tall, rather—." The image of Jim in his blue every-day suit was blurred, and the girls hurried down the aisle to the door.

"This is Virginia, Jim—my nice brother, Virgie. Where's the machine?"

Jim took the baggage from the girls, led them to where a Ford machine stood waiting, and tucked them and the bags within. "Wait till I see about the checks," said he, and disappeared in the freight room of the small station. But he soon reappeared and they started on their way to Isabel's. The streets were a mixture of mud and snow. It had been sleet-ing a little and Jim drove carefully through the main streets, past neat frame houses, with here and there one of brick, stone or stucco, till they reached a big, rambling old-time colonial house, set in a large yard.

"We've never taken our fence down, like so many of the folks," said Isabel, apologetically, as she pointed out the place and the low iron fence. "But we have all kinds of vines over it in the summer, clematis and ramblers and things. I was so disappointed not to have you here when the town looks pretty. Hilary would be delighted with our little orchard in bird time."

Out of the house came two hatless youths as the machine drew up to the curb. "Mercy—nothing on their heads this cold day!" exclaimed Virginia; but Isabel and Jim only smiled.

"The twins, Virgie," said Isabel, as she climbed out. Jim handed the bags to the smiling boys, Virgie was introduced to "Slim" and "Shorty," and they were in the warm house in a jiffy. "I bungled most of my introductions, Virginia," said Isabel. "Now see if I can properly present the boys to you."

All the boys had kept awake till Isabel and her friend should arrive, but Norman and Edwin, having satisfied their affection for Isabel and their curiosity about Virginia, soon disappeared. Virgie placed them at once and was sure she would remember which was which, and noted how like Isabel her next older brother, Lou, was. Jim she had met first, and had his appearance stored away in her mind. But she was puzzled about the twins. They looked alike, as twins do, though there was enough difference, Virgie thought, to make distinction not too hard, but she was mixed on the introduction and thought that she would have to ask Isabel again. Will caught a puzzled look from her, and accustomed to the situation, called, "Come here, Shorty, I want to make sure that Miss Virgie knows us."

Virginia looked up at a tall, slim figure, taller than Jim, with merry brown eyes and slightly stooping shoulders. The boys laughed at her mystified look. "'Shorty!'" she gasped.

"Because he *isn't* short, Virgie," said Isabel. "Boys are that way."

"Then you are Will, and 'Slim,'" said Virginia, looking at Will's sturdy proportions.

"Exactly," said he. "Milton is so studious that he is getting a trifle round-shouldered, but when he gets his growth we think that he will be all right."

"Milton's getting his growth is another of our brilliant jokes," explained Isabel. "He is over six

feet now. Oh, here's Father," as a quiet, pleasant looking man came in with Jim, and embraced his daughter. "We'll find Auntie upstairs, I suppose, seeing that the rooms are warm enough, and taking the bags to the right place herself, instead of letting Jim know where to put them."

It was not long before the family had said good-night and the girls were tucked away in Isabel's room, big and airy in summer-time, but warm now from a furnace fire. Good, substantial walnut furniture, home-made book shelves, and clean window curtains were in evidence. "Do you like a big pillow?" asked Isabel.

"No, I'll just sleep on the little one," answered Virginia. Isabel took two large square pillows from the bed and dumped them on a chair.

"Auntie insists on having these, for fear somebody might want them. The two little pillows, you see, take the place of a bolster. She has a bolster and even bigger pillows than these in her room. I don't know whether she sleeps on them or not. Isn't it funny the way different people do?"

"I bought a baby pillow, you remember, to take to camp last summer."

"It makes you straight to sleep without any pillow."

"You know what the girls say about our pillows at school, don't you?"

“‘One feather in each, but if you double it it makes two!’ My, how sleepy I am!”

Morning woke Virginia with a pleasant sense of being in family life. It was vacation for the boys as well. Jim and his father, who had no vacation from business, rose early, were served with breakfast by Auntie, and went on their way. The school people slept till a later hour. Virgie started up when she heard slight sounds, but Isabel told her to rest as long as she wanted to. “The arrangement is that we shall get our own breakfasts when we feel like it.”

“What could be nicer?” replied Virgie as she sank back on her pillow.

“We shall have cocoa, any kind of breakfast food that you want, some fruit, of course—and what else? I shall interview the pantry when I get up. If we stay in bed too late, of course, the boys may leave us scant choice.”

“It is so funny to think of all those boys around. I can’t realize it. But I think that your brothers are as fine as can be. I’m not used to boys, and I suppose I shall seem terribly stupid about their jokes and all.”

“I’ve learned to hold my own with them, but you need not worry. You are a guest and are not to be teased. You can just look pleasant at anything you don’t understand. Jim won’t do any teasing. He’s gotten past that age.”

“I’ve heard that boys have ‘ages.’ ”

"Yes, they do. But Jim and Father would never stand for any horrid practical jokes—except just little ones, so I haven't had such a terrible time, after all. Sometimes I think it's pretty fine to have so many brothers. I always used to wish that one of them had been a sister, but I concluded that there wasn't any of the boys that I could spare, anyhow, and if I had a sister she'd have to be extra. Then I went to Greycliff and at once had a lot of sisters! The Psyche Club supplies the lack!"

The girls talked on till, thoroughly awake, they began to feel the pangs of hunger. "I believe I could eat a piece of hot toast and a scrambled egg," said Isabel. "How about you, Virgie?" Virginia acknowledged that the suggestion was pleasing. It was not long before the girls were down in the big kitchen with Aunt Helen, who seemed pleased to have them there, and started to the pantry to bring out something for their breakfast.

"Remember the rules we made about vacations, Aunt Helen. Except in cases of sickness, late comers get their own breakfast."

"But we have company," protested Aunt Helen.

"Virgie isn't company. I promised her to treat her like one of the family. Here, Virginia, you can cut the bread while I hunt up the butter and things."

Isabel flew around capably, putting some puffed wheat in dishes, setting out the cream, cutting some oranges in two, setting out a bottle of milk and the

can of cocoa. "What do you suppose we girls are so crazy about cocoa for?"

"I imagine it's because it's so much like chocolate candy."

"Good morning," said somebody.

"What do you think of that!" exclaimed Isabel. "Here are Will and Milton down for breakfast, too. I'll be good to them and ask them to have breakfast with us. We'll all eat our fruit and cereal together as soon as I get the cocoa made. Then I'll scramble the eggs while you or the boys make the toast and everything will be hot. We'll want two cups of cocoa, won't we?"

"Four of everything, please," said Milton, his tall form appearing in the door.

"I meant two cups apiece, Milt," replied his sister. "You and Will are invited to take breakfast with us. Please get the electric toaster ready. Yes, I believe I would cut a few more pieces, Virginia. You don't know how it disappears in this family, and when we make it right at the table it is so good and hot. That is one thing we have in this town, electricity, if we haven't natural gas to cook with. In the summer we use coal-oil stoves, and fireless cookers."

"Isn't she the little talker, though," asked Milton. "My, but it's been quiet here till today."

"Quiet!" said Aunt Helen.

"That's right, Aunt Helen, stand up for me a little," said the dimpling Isabel. Aunt Helen was mak-

ing mince for the Christmas pies and stood at the stove stirring her savory mixture. She smiled in her demure way and stirred in a few more raisins.

“Going to have any pumpkin pies, Aunt Helen?” inquired Will.

“We always have them, you know,” replied his aunt.

“Tell us if there are any plans for a good time this week,” said Isabel, looking at her brothers. “Please watch this cocoa a minute, Virgie. I have to get some more milk.”

“We have only been here two or three days ourselves,” said Will.

“Don’t tease your little sister,” said Milton. “Tell her what we are going to do.” By this time the breakfast was nearly enough ready for the young people to sit down, a progressive breakfast, as Isabel said.

“What is it?” asked Isabel as she passed the cream.

“The boys are going to get up an old-fashioned sled party, going out to Effie Smith’s, in the country, Virginia.”

“How can you with the roads as they are?”

“Cold weather is predicted, Isabel. Didn’t you feel how much colder it was?”

“It was cold enough, but you have to have snow.”

“The blizzard is obligingly on its way. We’re

going to have frozen roads, plenty of snow, and clearing weather for the trip. Mark my words!"

A rapid step on the stairs, dash through the hall, and Lou Hunt was in the dining room. "Come on, Lou," said Isabel cheerily. "Room for one more. Cocoa on the stove." Lou spoke his morning greetings to Virginia, cut another orange, filled a dish with cereal, a cup with hot cocoa, and sat down next to Virginia. The two other boys were opposite the girls, and Will pushed some extra silver over to Lou.

The informal, jolly ways of the family delighted Virgie. She listened to the bright comments of the boys, putting in a word or two when addressed. Will told how the daughter of the local magnate was going to give a party and had invited the older Hunt boys and Isabel. At Will's expression the girls exchanged glances, and Isabel said, "See, Virgie, there it is, 'the Hunt boys and Isabel!'"

"I told her that one of the Greycliff girls was coming and she immediately extended the invitation to Virginia."

"Oh, how good of her!" said Virginia, delighted.

"Effie has sent out regular invitations. Yours is on the mantel in the sitting room, Isabel. We forgot to give your mail to you last night. She found out that the boys were thinking of it, so got up these cute invitations. They say, 'Ye Old Time Sledding Party' and runs on in a quaint way, leaving the date unsettled till snow time. Her brother is going to call

up the boys when the snow is right and they are ready for us."

"Meanwhile," said Milton, "it is up to us to get our girls engaged ahead. May I have the pleasure of your company, Miss Hope?"

"Listen to that!" exclaimed Will, while Virgie looked, surprised and flushing a little at this invitation. "I was going to ask her myself. This is no place to ask a girl to a party—at the breakfast table before the rest of us are awake!"

"I believe in efficiency," said Milton, offering Virgie a piece of hot toast. "Make your plans early and lose no time in carrying them out."

A great clatter was heard on the stairs. Whiz! Norman slid down the bannisters and Edwin followed. In a moment Norman appeared, and Edwin's delicate face was thrust inside the door as he peeped at the girls.

"Come on in, Edwin," said Isabel. "Norman, I thought you were too old to slide down bannisters."

"Seems to me I remember a girl that did it not so very long ago," said Norman, who had already greeted Virginia.

"That was before I went to Greycliff and learned better."

The others were through with their late breakfast, but Isabel waited to help Aunt Helen prepare something for the two younger boys, while Will, Milton and Lou accompanied Virginia into the sitting room.

This was a new experience to Virginia, "so many boys all nice to her at once," as she said to Isabel. Milton, who remembered Isabel's early description of Virginia, said to her in private, "Why didn't you tell us she was good-looking?"

"Why, I never thought about her looks. But she certainly has changed from when she came to Grey-cliff. She was half sick then, and her clothes didn't fit her. Now she is happy, and well, and her hair is glossy and thick. I believe Virgie is almost pretty,"

"She looks as if she had some sense. I like her. But I did that on purpose to get ahead of old Will."

"Don't worry. Virgie isn't going to think you are in love with her because you ask her to a party. I told her you would all be good to her and I knew I could count on you to make her have a good time."

"She shall have it," said Milton as he went off whistling.

Virginia had intended to keep a little diary of events on her visit. But they moved too quickly for that. The snow came that had been promised by the weather man. Bundled in wraps, robes and hay, the gay sled load of young folks sped to their destination in the country, to the tune of sleigh bells. The party in town came off duly, a day or two before Christmas. The boys had been making skis in the wood-shed and kitchen and Virginia and Isabel had had their suspicions. Sure enough, on Christmas

morning each girl had a fine pair, marked "Christmas greetings from the boys."

It was hard to leave such a home full of cheer and Virginia was especially pleased to have Mr. Hunt tell her how much it had added to their Christmas-time to have her with them. Every boy was at the train to see them off to Greycliff again. "Promise to come back next summer," said Milton.

"If I can," Virginia assured him. "Oh, Isabel," said she, as the train carried them farther and farther away, "what a wonderful time I have had!"

"What did you like best?" asked Isabel.

"The folks, and the nice times you all have together. The parties were just great, but I liked the times in the kitchen when we were cracking nuts or making candy. Your brothers are handy at everything."

"We've had to help Aunt Helen so much. Father and Jim made us in the beginning. Now we hire help, though, to come in and do the heavy cleaning. But it takes so much money to keep me at Greycliff and help the two boys through college. Lou will go next year, you know."

"It was such a help to talk with them about things I could do to help out with my funds." Virginia thought, too, with satisfaction, of the boxes of home-made candy which were on their way to Greycliff by the same train.

"You couldn't do the things they do, of course, but it is fun to talk it over."

"That recipe of your Aunt Helen's is better than mine for the nut candy. I think the candy will keep soft longer. I feel as if I ought to pay her for it."

"She was so glad to have a hand in it. Now we are going to charge enough for this candy to make what we ought to on it. Now, remember, and don't get soft-hearted and give it away. I say 'we,' even if you would insist on buying all the materials. You see I'm interested in this business of yours."

"You forget all those hickory nuts and walnuts that Milton insisted on cracking and picking out. I think that Edwin and Norman gathered most of them, didn't they?"

"Yes, but they had such a lot that they would never get eaten. They don't make candy except when I'm home. Oh, once in a while Aunt Helen does. But it isn't good for Edwin, and we have to be so careful about him. I'm afraid he will be sick after our Christmas celebrations."

"I hope not. Well, I'll remember, Isabel, at least about this particular candy, that it is very valuable, and charge enough to the girls. This candy represents a great deal more than just sugar and nuts!"

CHAPTER XII

WITH THE NORTHS

LILIAN scarcely knew how to feel about these vacation days. It was so strange not to be going back to the old home. Yet she was happy, too, to be entering the new experience of a home in the same city with Cathalina, to say nothing of Philip, whom she would see at this holiday time. Judge and Mrs. North had taken an apartment temporarily, perhaps permanently, though both were missing the freedom and space of their former home. It was, however, much easier for Mrs. North to look after a compact apartment than the big two-story and attic place which had been theirs for so many years.

"It seems that I never can have a visit from you, Lil," said Hilary, on the day of departure from Grey-cliff. "Last year it was one thing; this year something else."

"Mother scarcely had any visit with me last summer, you know," said Lilian.

"Yes, I know, and there are other attractions in New York as well," and Hilary looked at Lilian with a quizzical little smile.

"I understand that somebody nice is coming to Cincinnati, too," said Lilian.

"Maybe," assented Hilary. "Campbell said that he was trying hard to plan it. He will just stop off, you know."

"Oh, certainly—just accidentally call around, as it were."

Hilary laughed. "Not very accidentally, I guess."

"Ready, Lilian?" called Cathalina. "There is the bus."

"Coming!"

Arrived in New York, the girls found two brothers to meet them, Richard North and Philip Van Buskirk, with Phil's car. Phil was driving, and it must be confessed that he paid more attention to Lilian than to Cathalina, whom he left to Richard, putting Lilian next to himself in the car. Richard and Cathalina exchanged an amused glance, then dismissed Lilian and Philip from their thoughts and had a good visit, while Richard told Cathalina about the North affairs and his good success in the office.

"I think that I am in luck," said he, "to step into a firm in this city with every chance of making good. And you may be interested in knowing that we have our eyes on another young man. He has been reading with another lawyer a little, but we think that we may be able to offer sufficient inducement to get him to come with us." Richard's lips curved into a smile. How he enjoyed using that "we"! And Cathalina

was all interest, for she knew a young man who was studying law, going to law school when he could, or reading with a lawyer.

"Of course Dad and his old friends will be in the game for a long time, but they want a pair of us young chaps, and I'd like to work with Van Horne."

"Captain Van Horne!"

"Yes. I met him at your house, you know."

"I've only seen him a few times since school began, and he didn't say anything about it."

"He doesn't know it, but I feel that he will consider it an opportunity, and if he comes to New York on his vacation, I'll have him meet my father and his friend."

"Is your other sister coming to spend Christmas with you? Lilian said that no one had mentioned it, nor answered her questions about it."

"We have been so busy that I judge Mother hasn't written very fully to anybody, and I have not written at all. No, it is too far to bring the kiddies in cold weather, and there is a little baby this year."

Philip, meanwhile, was making arrangements to see as much as possible of Lilian during the vacation. "I don't know how many family parties they are arranging for this time," Philip was saying, "but unless you are invited, too, I don't expect to be among those present. Now, have you any special plans for your time?" Philip was watching the traffic, but his voice was eager.

"No, I haven't, Philip, except to be with Father and Mother and Dick on Christmas Day, and go to church with them on Sundays."

"Good. Now, could you let me take you to a lot of things that are going on? There is some music that I know you will enjoy. Suppose I come over this evening with the 'program,' and let you make the dates ahead."

Lilian turned to look at Philip and met a glance that made her drop her eyes. "Do come, Phil," she said, "I shall be delighted to see you."

"I'm glad you didn't say 'we,' Lilian," replied Philip. "And I'd really like to carry you off somewhere tonight, for some ices and cake or something —anything, you know, so we can talk. After I've seen the family, of course. Are you too tired?"

"No, indeed. I think it's lovely of you to want to make me have such a good time."

"I'm not altogether unselfish, Lilian," said Philip with a laugh. "I've been looking forward to this vacation. I enjoyed having you at our house, but there were so many other people around that I had to play host to. Now there isn't anybody else?"

"Where is Ann Maria?" asked Lilian, mischievously.

"At Aunt Katherine's, as usual. Why, Lilian!" exclaimed Philip, as he began to understand the meaning of her question. "Did you—do you think I care especially for Ann Maria?"

But before Lilian could answer that question, Cathalina leaned forward with some remark to Philip, and then they had arrived in front of the apartment building. Saying to both Lilian and Dick that he planned to "run over" in the evening, Philip drove off with Cathalina to the Van Buskirk home, where welcome waited for Cathalina.

Lilian's heart was not beating in quite normal fashion as Philip asked that last question, but as she rode up in the elevator with Dick she put the matter temporarily out of her mind, and prepared to meet her dear people.

"Oh, what a dear apartment!" she exclaimed, after the first greetings were over. "And here are all our nice old things, Father's law books and all, and grandmother's old mahogany. Why, it seems like home, after all. I guess home is chiefly folks and a few of the things you love. And it will be so easy to do things here."

"I found a good woman to come twice a week, and the rest I shall do myself. Come, see the new gas range; and Father and Dick have brought in all sorts of electrical utensils, toaster, grill—here they are. But when you have rested, I want to hear you sing."

"Oh, yes. You know I could not keep away from the piano, my beloved piano!—and I have all sorts of pretty new things. Some of them my teacher gave me, and some of them I just picked up from

hearing what the other girls sang. Eloise and I have been getting some pretty duets. I thought perhaps Philip and I might sing together, too."

"Has Philip written to you steadily, Lilian?" asked her mother.

"Yes, about every week."

"You are pretty young, daughter, for anything serious."

"Yes, I know it."

"Are you sure that it may not be Philip's fine home, and stylish clothing, and the free way in which he can spend money that are attractive?"

"Mother, Philip would be himself, wouldn't he, if he didn't have those things? And Phil is really gifted. The first minute we met we began to talk and haven't it all said yet. He plays wonderfully, and I guess he could make a living at that if he didn't have any money. Then he has so much good sense, too, and is so interested in his father's business. He asked me to let him write an accompaniment for that little lullaby I made up, and sang for them last summer, and I'm just crazy to try it. He has it finished, he says. Just wait till you see him. He is coming over to see me tonight. Or perhaps you have met him?"

"No. Mrs. Van Buskirk told me that he would arrive last night. We were invited out there last week. I shall be glad to see the boy who is so in-

trested in my little girl, but I scarcely know what to think about it, Lilian."

"I don't believe you need worry, Mother. But I like Philip, better than any boy I know. And he seems so grown up now."

"This is his last year in college, isn't it?"

"Yes; and he told me last summer that if we get into the war he has promised his father to finish out the year anyway. Have you met Mrs. Van Ness and the Stuarts and the rest?"

"Yes, a number of the relatives. We put our letters in the church, too, and have met some fine people there. But I have been so busy getting settled that I have had time to think of little else. Several times Mrs. Van Buskirk has telephoned and brought the car around for me. We had lunch together, and went shopping for the apartment. She is charming."

"Indeed she is, and I know she is thinking the same thing of you. Just wait till I see her. About the first thing she will say is, 'My dear, what a lovely woman your mother is!'"

Mrs. North laughed. "I am considerably older than she, I think."

"I don't know about that. You may be a grandmother, but I scarcely think that our Margery is so much older than Philip."

"Oh, yes, Lilian. Margery is twenty-five, and has been married four years."

"That is only a few years older, anyhow. She seems older because of the three babies."

"Evening came, and Philip. Lilian did not know just where she might be taken, but dressed for evening and laid out her pretty new evening wrap, over which she had gone into raptures. It was to have been a Christmas present, but learning of Philip's plans for Lilian, Mrs. North had decided to give it in advance. For a cruel parent, who did not approve of anything serious in the line of love and marriage for Lilian in the near future, Mrs. North was taking a great deal of interest! "But if you are going around so much this vacation, I suppose you will need it now," she said.

Although Philip was so accustomed to meeting people, he felt some measure of embarrassment when he met Lilian's parents. Judge North he knew, and Dick, but Mrs. North would appraise him, he felt, as he came to call upon her daughter so definitely. However, he intended to make a general visit as well, and in the pleasant atmosphere of hospitality, with many things in common as subjects of conversation, Philip's embarrassment soon passed. Lilian's piano, newly tuned, had to be tried, and Philip surprised Mrs. North, as people were wont to be surprised when they heard him play. Dick left soon to meet an engagement, and as Philip finished the accompaniment he was playing for Lilian, he whispered, "Shall we go?"

"We are leaving, now, folks," announced Lilian, bowing to her father's applause. "Did you like that, Father?"—starting to get her wraps as she spoke.

It was the little electric coupé that was parked outside. "Isn't this fine!" exclaimed Philip as he tucked the robes around Lilian. "Are we really by ourselves going off somewhere? Where would you like to go?"

"I haven't an idea," said Lilian. "Anywhere."

"That is the way I feel about it," said Philip, "only in a different degree, I fear me. As long as I have you, the place is immaterial. And before we start I want to ask you what you meant by asking me where Ann Maria was. And you did not answer my question."

"I couldn't, you know."

"Yes, I know. But you will answer me now, won't you?"

"Let me see; what was it?"

Philip hesitated. "Some way, I think you know, don't you? I asked you if you thought that I cared for Ann Maria."

"You said 'especially'."

"Yes, I *thought* you would remember!"

"I have been trying to think, Philip, how I would answer that. Because, you see, I should not have asked the first question. I did think, Philip," continued Lilian, honestly, "that you must care for her,

or that there had been some special affection between you."

"Was it anything that I did?" asked Philip.

"It was more her manner, a sort of taking possession of you. But I must apologize for referring to it at all. It isn't any of my affair."

"Oh, it isn't?" said Philip hopelessly. "Then you didn't suppose I meant anything when I talked to you in the pine grove at Merrymeeting, or other times?"

"I—I didn't know—what to think about it all."

"Cathalina could have told you all about Ann Maria."

"I didn't ask her."

"Didn't you care enough?"

"Oh, Philip, can't you understand how a girl feels? I *couldn't*!"

"I could; I asked Cathalina all about those boys in your home town, and at the military school."

"That is very different."

"I haven't gone at it in the right way, I suppose. But you are a friend of mine anyhow, aren't you?"

"I should think I am!" Lilian laughed.

"As far as Ann Maria is concerned, I never have made love to Ann Maria and never shall, but that's what I am trying to do to you! I thought at first that I ought not to do it. I thought your father and mother would not like to have you in love with me, and perhaps I ought not to try to make you like me.

Then the prospect of our getting into the war made me think so all the more. But, Lilian, I can't stand it. If I go to war and get all shot up I'll not let you marry me, but I must know whether you can love me a little or not. You are the only girl on earth for me, and I want a chance to be with you this week. I'm asking you to marry me, sweetheart, and I want you to think it over and let me know before the vacation is over." Philip's earnest eyes looked into Lilian's. He evidently had no idea of the high regard in which Lilian held him, for he spoke as if she might have to consider the matter of her affections for some time.

"You take my breath away, Philip," said Lilian.

"Yes?" inquired Philip. "I'd like to run away with you this minute." he added. "But the idea of an elopement might not strike you!" Philip had started the little car by this time, and they rolled easily along. "I'm taking you to a quiet little French place where we shall have good things to eat and fine service."

Over the little table where they sat a long time to visit, Lilian said: "Philip, since you have said so much tonight, and put an end to some of *my* worries, I want to tell you that you need not be so humble about my liking you."

"Lilian!" exclaimed Philip under his breath, his eyes lighting up.

"Yes, I believe I'll tell you how horribly jealous I've been of Ann Maria."

"Honestly? Was that why some of your letters were so cool?"

"Were they? Yes, I suppose so. I've trusted you most of the time, though."

"And you do altogether now?"

"Oh, yes. But you are right about the folks. I'm afraid Mother will think I'm too young to be engaged to you."

"But how about you, Lilian?"

"I seem to feel pretty grown up, Philip."

"What does that mean?"

"I can't imagine any one, Philip, as fine as you are, and in spite of all the common sense I've tried to bring to bear upon the subject, thinking that perhaps you did not care for me anyhow, and that Father and Mother would say I couldn't be married for a long, long time—some way—" Lilian hesitated and blushed, while Philip leaned toward her in anxious anticipation. "Please don't stop," he urged whimsically.

"Well, Philip," Lilian continued soberly, "we seem to belong to each other, just naturally. And I will confess, too, that the best thing about this vacation was that I should see you again!"

"Lilian!" exclaimed Philip again. They were talking in undertones, while playing with their fast melting ice-cream, for the room was warm, if it was

winter outside. "I had no idea that I was going to be made so happy this first night of your coming. I thought perhaps I could persuade you, if I tried hard enough! Indeed, I have had the feeling that we belonged to each other, but I scarcely hoped that it might be mutual. Will you have something else?" The waiter was approaching again.

"Nothing more," said Lilian.

"I've something to show you when we get in the car," said Philip, as with grace he ushered out his lady love. "Oh—I believe I'll wait till we get home. There is too much to say. You are the most wonderful girl not to keep me worrying all week."

"When you love people, you don't want them to be unhappy," said Lilian.

When they reached the apartment house again and the car was drawn up to the curb, Philip reached in his pocket, drew out a little package and slowly opened it. He took out something, while Lilian gasped in astonishment. "You will think me rather assured of the final outcome, I am afraid, but I wanted to persuade myself that it would be all right, you see. I went into Tiffany's yesterday. Now the hand, Lilian."

CHAPTER XIII

THE RING

WHEN Lilian entered the apartment at the hall door, she peeped into the front room and saw her father working at his desk. Her mother had evidently retired. She knew better than to disturb her father when he was working on a case. He would be patient, but it was a real interruption at such times. She only tapped gently on the door, saying, "Good-night, Father, I'm in," and waited till he turned his head, nodded and smiled, and turned again to his work. "I'm afraid he will forget, as he does sometimes, and then Mother will wake up and ask him if I'm in. I believe I'll leave my wraps inside the door—there. If anybody does any prowling around, they'll see my wraps." With which ungrammatical remark, Miss North retired to her room, but not to sleep—yet. She had been so engrossed in the words and presence of her lover that she had not yet half looked at the ring, though she had seen that it was beautiful. Turning on her light, she held up her hand with the flashing gem upon it. "Oh, you dear Philip boy," she said, "to

get that exquisite thing for me!" But Lilian was big enough to value more than the clear diamond the sincere love of the giver, and slipped into her warm nest under the blankets to lie awake a long time, and go over the new, sweet story that Philip had told her once and again. Her little prayer was one of gratitude and her last thought was, "I shall see Philip tomorrow."

In the morning, Mrs. North tapped on Lilian's door and came in to visit with her. Lilian gave her mother a warm hug and then slipped her left hand into her mother's. "Look!" said she.

"Oh, Lilian—just what I was afraid of!"

"Is it so dreadful, Mother?"

"Oh, no, my child, but you are so young to be engaged."

"Not if you are sure, Mother. Besides we do not intend to be married for some time. I am not so *terribly* young, either. And I don't see what possible objection you could have to Philip."

Mrs. North smiled. "I liked him very much. He is unusually attractive, and his face is good as well as handsome."

"That's a dear mother! But I accepted the ring, Mother, with the understanding that if you and Father felt too bad about it I would not wear it, and we would not announce the engagement. But we can't help caring for each other. I tried not to, because I thought Philip liked Ann Maria; and he was

so polite to everybody that I thought his attentions to me might not mean anything."

"Well, little girl, I'll talk to your father, and see what he says. It was very dear of you to be willing to wait in regard to the ring, and the acknowledged engagement." Mrs. North kissed Lilian, patted the little hand that wore the ring, and went out to talk to her husband.

"What do you think, Father?"

The judge considered a moment. "How old is Lilian?"

"Eighteen last month. And girls aren't as grown up now as they used to be."

"Oh, yes, they are. They just go to school longer. Well, Mother, I'd rather this hadn't happened right now, of course. On the other hand, this young fellow has the qualities that would always appeal to Lilian; he is a good, clean boy, and will have means enough to support her. A father always has to think of that, you know. He is going into business with his father, unless that war over in Europe finally gets all our young men. It looks as if we should be in it pretty soon. How do you think Lilian would feel if she were not engaged to Philip and he goes to France?"

"She would probably be better satisfied to be openly engaged to him, for she seems to care for him so much. But how is one to know!"

"How does anybody know? How old were you when we were married, Mother?"

"Twenty."

"And we had been engaged a year: This is not so much worse, is it?"

"No, I suppose not."

"You talk it over with Lilian, Mother. Whatever you decide is acceptable to me. I like the young man and the family, and we do not want to spoil Lilian's happiness. On the other hand, I do not like long engagements, if they can be avoided. Lilian has two or three years of school, Philip this one, and then business—or war."

"So the learned judge wants his wife to decide after all."

"Yes. I get enough experience in that line."

At breakfast they all talked on general topics. Dick had had Louise Van Ness out to a concert the night before, and reported on the program, asking Lilian where she and Philip had gone. Plans for Christmas and New Year's were discussed. Lilian had taken off the ring before coming to the table. No need to tell Dick until the matter was decided. Judge North and Richard departed for the city in due time, while Lilian and her mother were making the "house" neat. Lilian told her mother the latest news from Greycliff, with much interesting chatter about the Psyche Club, Virgie's plans, the class work, and other activities. Very sweet and womanly was

Lilian this morning. Finally, each found some bit of Christmas handwork to do, and sat down in the living room to discuss the important topic.

"I am trying to think it out, Lilian," said Mrs. North. "I think that you know how I feel about it. We realize that it is important and serious to you both, and something about which you will finally decide yourselves. And both your father and I appreciate your fine attitude of consulting with us, and listening to our advice for the present. Your happiness and welfare are our first concern. Do you think that if you wear the ring this one happy week among the relatives, you could lay it off during the rest of the school year at Greycliff? I feel pretty sure that Miss Randolph would prefer it. I want you to be a real school girl this year, yet now it is too late to go back to the old relation with Philip. Do you think that you can get your lessons as well?"

"Oh, yes! I'll not be worrying about Ann Maria now, especially if I may wear the ring here!"

Lilian had scarcely finished her sentence when the telephone sounded, and she dropped her work into her chair while she ran to answer it. There was somebody at the other end of the line who brought out a pleased smile on Lilian's face as she listened. "Oh, yes, we are up, and just sitting working on Christmas things. How can I answer that over the telephone? Yes, I think you'd better come over at

once. All right, wait a minute—Mother, can we go out to lunch with Philip?"

"Most happy," said her mother.

"Yes, Philip, she will; says 'Most happy.' Yes, it is pretty *nearly* all right. Come over and talk to her about it. Very well. Goodbye."

Lilian came back smiling mischievously. "I told him to come over and talk it over with you. He is afraid to do it, I know."

"Naughty child, you know that I can't say anything disagreeable to him."

"You won't want to. Philip Van Buskirk is warranted to melt the hardest heart."

"Yours, my daughter, was not hard to begin with!"

"It was adamant to every suitor till Philip appeared on the scene! Picture, if you can, the mid-Victorian Lilian scorning her suitors, but fainting in the arms of the true hero."

"What is the name of your melodrama?"

"The Cruel Parent, or the Fate of Lilian North."

Lilian was her gay self. Philip was coming. Her parents liked him, however doubtful they might be of the wisdom of an engagement. There would be more than a week to which to wear the beautiful ring. This itself would announce to the circle of Philip's relatives the new relation. Then she and Philip could write during the months of separation, while they finished the school year. There would

be vacations and all sorts of good times ahead. What a lovely world—for Philip loved her!

It took a little courage on Philip's part to arrange this luncheon, but no effort was too great to win and please Lilian's mother. Cathalina had heard him telephoning, the last few sentences, as she came into the library where he was. "Wasn't that Lilian?" she asked.

"Yes, dear sister; I am inviting Mrs. and Miss. North to go out to lunch with me."

"Not going to ask us, too?" asked Cathalina, a little surprised.

"Not this time, Kit; the combination would be too much under the circumstances."

"What do you mean, Philly?"

"I'll tell you. Come over here, Cathalina."

Philip led Cathalina to the window-seat where he and Lilian had visited more than once, during the house-party of the previous summer.

"Cathalina, I asked Lilian to marry me last night."

"Oh, Philip. And did she say she would?"

"Yes, but she wasn't sure what her father and mother would think about her being engaged so young. She has heard them discuss those matters. I don't know what she has said to her mother about it, and, of course, her father will not be home until night; but I couldn't stand it to wait, so I called up and asked Lilian and her mother to go to lunch with

me. Don't you hope Mrs. North will be good to me?"

"Don't worry. She will, I'm sure. Does Mother know?"

"I told her the other day that I was in love with Lilian, but I think that it was no news to her. I suppose she saw it last summer."

"Were you really, Philip, last summer?"

"Indeed I was."

"It is so dear of you to tell me about it. I thought when you asked me about whether Lilian cared much for those other boys that you must care a good deal, and I have been so glad that Lilian liked you. I could tell."

"That was more than I could. But it's all right now. How will you like Lilian for a sister?"

"She is lovely, and we girls that live with her know. You are both crazy about music, and both—Oh, everything is perfect about it. I'm crazy to see her. But I don't wonder you want to have them to lunch alone till you know how you stand with Mrs. North. Are you going to tell Mother about it?"

"Right away, before I go."

"That is good—I think that she will be pleased."

"Mothers are not always so pleased, but she likes Lilian; she told me so."

The luncheon went off successfully, Philip and Mrs. North feeling a little more at home together. That evening, also, Philip appeared again at the

apartment, and Judge North took his hand at the door. Putting his other hand on Philip's shoulder, he asked. "Is this the young man that wants to marry my little girl?"

"Yes, sir," said Philip promptly and with dignity.

"Well, you could do worse!" concluded the judge, to Philip's astonishment and amusement. The judge laughed, too, saying, "Here, Lilian, tell him what your mother's conclusions are. We men have small chance, Philip, small chance," and Judge North shook his head, pretending to be very solemn.

Lilian had her wraps at hand, for Philip was taking her to an entertainment. It was to be Broadway tonight.

Cathalina was over the next morning. The girls had an exciting visit in Lilian's room, talking over the great event, looking at the ring which expressed so much, and recalling past incidents.

"Do you remember that time when Philip arrived at camp just in time to see you beat me in tennis?"

"Yes, I do."

"Campbell told me then that Phil had a difficult problem on his hands, choosing between his sister and 'best girl,' but he thought that the 'best girl' stood first."

"You don't care, do you, Cathalina?"

"Not a bit. It is different, Lilian. Now I might fall in love myself, you know. And I'll have Phil for a brother to be proud of always. This is so

romantic; but you ought to have a great deal more of trouble, to have it like a story, you know."

"I've had all the worries I want, Cathalina Van Buskirk, and it is terrible that I can't wear his ring all the time!"

"But just think what a sensation it will make at the Christmas gathering at our house."

"Am I going to be there?"

"Of course you are. Aren't you going to be in the family? Two years ago when Hilary was visiting me, Cousin John had his sweetheart there. And I know a secret about Christmas, too. Phil told me. If you can't wear a ring because it marks you as engaged, you can wear something else, can't you?"

"Why, yes! I hadn't thought of that. I wonder what it is. Can I wear it all the time?"

"Yes, if you want to."

"He oughtn't to give me anything more. The ring takes my breath away, as Phil did last night. Do you think I'm silly, Cathalina?"

"No, Lilian. It would be dreadful, with Phil thinking so much of you, if you could not care for him."

"I wish old Hilary were here. I wrote her a tiny note this morning, before you came."

"She ought to be at the family dinner, too, but I imagine it won't be many years before she will. Campbell was struck with her that very time. We shall miss Campbell. I suspect that he is on his way

to Cincinnati now. But I suppose you know all about their plans."

"Hilary and I are very confidential, of course, but Hilary is shy about her love affair, and does not say much about Campbell. She writes him a long letter every week, though, and I think he writes oftener."

Mrs. Van Buskirk came alone to call on Lilian and her mother that very afternoon. She was sweet and motherly to Lilian, and expressed her pleasure in the arrangement. The entire North family were invited to the family dinner at the Van Buskirk's on Christmas evening, but Mrs. North felt uncertain about herself and the judge, for Christmas was a home day to Judge North. Lilian promised to be there, and Mrs. Van Buskirk told her laughingly that indeed she could not help herself, for Philip would be after her. Richard would speak for himself later.

The North home was well decorated these vacation days, for Philip either brought or sent flowers every day. Mrs. North insisted that Lilian's health would be undermined by the extravagant boxes of candy which came, and new music, both classic and "rag-time," found its place upon Lilian's piano. Such a happy time it was. Philip accompanied Lilian, or at the Van Buskirk's Cathalina accompanied them both, or Lilian played a violin obligato while Philip sang and Cathalina was at the piano.

On the night of the customary Christmas gathering, Philip drove over early for the Norths. The judge had concluded to go. "We might as well get acquainted with the relatives, Mother," said he. Lilian had been at home with them for the day, and Philip had been over only once, bringing another little tribute early in the morning and saying his "Merry Christmas" to them all. Judge North stated once or twice that they were going to miss Philip as much as Lilian when the vacation ended. "Philip is getting to be a habit," said he. The most fragrant pink roses of all that Philip had sent came for Lilian to wear to the family dinner.

They found the Van Nesses there when they arrived. Little Charlotte, older but just as pretty and spoiled, seized upon Philip at once and was greatly taken with Lilian. "Are you one of our cousins?" she asked.

"She is going to be, Charlotte," replied Philip for Lilian. "Sit here between us and I'll tell you about it."

"Oh, yes! It will be like Juliet and John. Do you like her, Philip?"

"I should think I do, Charlotte."

"Do you like Philip, Lilian?"

"Do you, Charlotte?"

"Oh, everybody likes Philip. Of course I do."

"So do I."

Meeting so many aunts, uncles, and cousins was

somewhat exciting to Lilian, though she enjoyed it. But she knew how interested they all were in Philip's choice. Many of the younger people she had met in the summer, and they greeted her as an old friend. Naturally graceful, and of a frank, friendly disposition, Lilian gained the approval of the assembled family. Ann Maria saw the flashing ring at once, and asked Philip if congratulations were in order. When he replied that they were she said, "Then you have mine, Philip," and went up to Lilian, saying in a low tone, "Welcome into the family, Lilian."

Nothing but the ring and Lilian's presence indicated the engagement, but Mrs. Van Buskirk was especially thoughtful of Lilian and saw that she met all the friends at this annual family reunion. There were several packages for Lilian on the Christmas tree, among them the gift from Philip to which Cathalina had referred.

Philip stood near as Lilian opened the package, so prettily tied. "Your chains," he explained gravely. "Let me put them on, please."

"'My chains!' Oh!" Lilian laughed, as she took from the cotton two dainty gold circlets for her wrist. "Bracelets—how delicate and pretty. You have the most exquisite taste, Philip," Cathalina came up just then, and Lilian held up her wrist, shaking her arm. "Hear them clank, Cathalina? Phil says these are my chains."

“They are what I said you could wear all the time, you know,” said Cathalina.

“I shall, day and night.”

CHAPTER XIV.

SKIING ON HIGH HILL

WHEN the girls gathered again at Greycliff after the winter vacation, there was much to tell. Lilian and Hilary exchanged confidences, and Cathalina told Betty all about her vacation days, and the romance surrounding Philip and Lilian. Lilian had left her ring at home with her mother, for safe keeping and lest she be tempted to wear it. But her "chains" she wore constantly, and took great comfort in the thought that Philip considered them quite as binding as a ring. She was quite sober at times, plunged into her work with determination, finding time, however, for two long letters a week to Philip, and wrote more poetry than ever.

Virginia's candy went off like hot cakes, as she said, giving her a comfortable little sum to begin on. She planned to make more of the popular varieties every Saturday. In a talk with Miss Randolph, she was assured that she might pay over what she had at the beginning of the next semester, and wait to settle finally until the end. This relieved her mind of all immediate worry, for there was a prospect of

her winning one of the prizes. Affairs might prove better with her father also, by that time, and meanwhile she would earn and save all she could. She had a complete outfit for mending, with all shades of thread, silk or cotton, and plenty of darning cotton. Her business descended upon her "like the wolf on the fold," she said.

"Talk about one's business growing! I don't even need to advertise. I didn't know there were so many lazy girls that hate to do anything for themselves!" Here Virginia cocked her head on one side. "That isn't really true, though, Isabel. I know all you girls have planned to waste your pin money on me by having as much done as possible. I'll have to make a new schedule of hours, and see how much time I can afford to spend on this without neglecting my lessons."

"And you must plan to take enough exercise, too, Virgie," said Isabel. "It wouldn't pay to get sick."

"No; but a little skating and skiing will give me what I need, with the walking to and from class, and I want to get ahead on funds while it is winter, before the lovely days come in the spring. I thought perhaps I could get one of the bird prizes, too, for an original description and a long bird list. Has the list of prizes been posted yet?"

"I haven't seen anything of it! I think it should be pretty soon, though, if there is anything new, so we could be working toward it."

“If I can just get the academy diploma I shall be partly satisfied. I think I could get some country school to teach out near home, where I could see Father occasionally, and perhaps I could go to college later.”

“Cathalina told me that her Aunt Katherine talked last Commencement time with Miss Randolph about some collegiate scholarships to be offered by Cathalina’s father, just as they have in high schools, you know. Now, if that happens, you will know that they weren’t just established for you.”

“No, that would be all right. But Miss Randolph did not say a word about anything like that.”

“Probably they aren’t ready to announce them yet, though you would think that they would in the fall.”

“Not if the idea is new and undecided. I’m working as hard as I can, anyhow, on all my lessons. You ought to get the first prize for scholarship, Isabel. I shall not be a bit jealous of you. I have had too much to make up; but if they give several scholarships I ought to get one, I think.”

Betty had been up in Canada with her mother during the vacation, and came back with stories of skating, skiing, and all sorts of winter sports.

“We went on account of my aunt, you know. She is so worried about the boys in France all the time, and is getting thin trying not to show it. But I had

the most wonderful time. I know so many of the young folks up there."

"Didn't you 'most freeze'?" asked Pauline. This was at the first meeting of the Psyche Club in the beginning of the second week of school.

"No, indeed; you dress for it. And I don't see that it is so much farther north than this, after all."

"Did your skis get here, all right, girls?" asked Juliet, of Isabel and Virginia.

"Yes. We tried walking on them Saturday. But I don't see how we are going to do much more than that!"

"I'll show you," offered Betty. "Do your brothers know how, Isabel?"

"Pretty well. It's a new sport in the town, and they haven't any very good hills there. I feel so clumsy with my skis on—don't see how you ever manage them."

"It is like everything else, you have to learn. How did you learn to stand up with skates on? Oh, it's just wonderful when you learn to take those jumps, with your pole to balance you—you feel as if you are flying!"

"Until you come down!"

"Yes, but you learn to land just right. Of course, there will be accidents, but if the snow is deep and soft it doesn't hurt to take a tumble once in a while. Let's all go out and practice Saturday. Can you spare the time, Virginia?"

"Oh, yes; I'll have to take a little recreation on Saturdays. I'm planning to make one or two batches of candy on Friday afternoon, after classes."

"I'll help you with the nuts, Virgie," said Isabel. "And if we get up early Saturday, you can have your candy made and sold by noon. All of us will be busy in the morning."

"Speaking of skiing, girls," said Lilian, "I have the most lovely song. Perhaps you have seen it or heard it, Eloise. I learned it this vacation. 'My Lover, He Comes on the Skee,' it is called. It is a Norwegian love-song."

"No, I haven't it," said Eloise.

"We must try it, then."

"Don't expect me to play it for you," said Cathalina, with a gesture of dismissal as far as she was concerned. "It has an awful accompaniment."

"'Awful!'" exclaimed Lilian. "It is beautiful—the most inspiring, rippling thing!"

"I mean, my dear, that it is hard to play. Here it is," said Cathalina, lifting a pile of books to take the sheet of music from the table. "Look at those runs, Hilary. Do you blame me? But Philip, of course, played it easily."

"The accompaniment is half of its attraction," said Lilian, exhibiting the song to Eloise, who was naturally interested and hummed the air as they went through it. "You get a picture of the action in every line, and I love it where it repeats 'the wind in his

wake is singing.' Then, here at the end it is so effective."

Cathalina turned to Hilary with a smile, saying aside, "'I love thee' is repeated several times, with growing emphasis! Of course she and Philip sang that in unison! But it really is a glorious love-song, and Lilian's voice is so clear and full on it. No wonder she likes it. Phil gave it to her. I don't think it has been out very long."

"Let's go down to the Shakespearean Hall and try it over," suggested Isabel. "I have the key."

"But who'll play it?" asked Cathalina.

"Evelyn will try it, I know," said Hilary. "She can play anything at sight."

"So can you, Hilary," said loyal Lilian, "but it will be fine if Evelyn will do it. Will you, Evelyn?"

"What is it?" asked Evelyn, who had been talking to Olivia. "Oh, that? Yes, I know it. The voice teacher gave that to one of the senior girls just before the holidays. I played the accompaniment for her two or three times."

For several days the girls hummed or sang the song, and made ready to go skiing on "high hill," as they called it, the hill back of Greycliff's buildings, which sloped away from the direction of the river over a broad expanse of unfenced land. It was not steep enough to be dangerous for the girls, the authorities had concluded, and on Saturday afternoon a number of the girls gathered there, some of them

to learn, others to enjoy a sport to which they were accustomed. There were, indeed, several hills from which to make a start, and this proved good for the learners. They could practice without getting in the way of the more experienced.

Isabel and Virginia were laughing over their various attempts, and Betty was alternately showing them with great patience and shooting down the hill herself, when a group of young men came round from behind Greycliff, making for the brow of the hill. "Look!" exclaimed one of the girls. "There are a lot of boys with their German professor!"

"They have gotten permission at Greycliff to use the hill," said another. "Do you suppose we'll have to go?"

"Of course not," replied the first. "Miss Randolph knew we were out here. Unless she sends for us, we can stay."

More life was naturally infused into the scene when the boys began to take part. Greetings were exchanged between those who knew each other, and Captain Holley watched with interest the flying figure of Betty, who happened to have started down 'hill before they arrived. Hastily adjusting his own skis, he was next on the track and arrived in time to help Betty uphill again. Poor Donald Hilton was having trouble with his skis and watched the handsome young officer, whom he now considered his rival with Betty, with rising wrath. A graceful

figure Rudolph Holley made as he started down the long track again. His staff in air, he jumped as only a practised performer could do, while Betty and the other girls watched admiringly.

Betty was not aware how unsatisfactory her manner was to Donald that afternoon. He came up to visit with her, and they chatted together on different topics, but he found her too much interested in skiing to permit of much visiting. She had no idea that Donald had anything special on his mind, having asked him at first if he had found out who had fixed his room before the military reception. He had replied that one of the boys had owned up to it, and she had taken that as final. Donald, however, had much more to tell, but the circumstances were not propitious. Donald could do well himself on the skis, but there was something the matter with one this afternoon. He barely saved himself from a bad tumble the first time, and considered that he had been about as awkward as a beginner. This before Betty did not please him, particularly since there was such a handsome expert in the group.

On Betty's part there was her great love for winter sports. She was much interested in Donald, liked him, felt happy when she was with him, and had confidence in him. But she was not in love, in spite of the romance of their first meeting. Probably neither Donald nor Betty had analyzed their feelings at this stage. It was youth and young romance, and

nothing very serious. To Betty life was full of good times. Donald, too, had his friends among the boys, and many a jolly performance was staged at the military school. Before the girls left, however, Donald had opportunity to ask Betty if he might call.

"Yes, indeed," said she. "I rather expected you before the holidays—that is, you said you were coming."

"I know it, and you were good to say I might come, but I had all those demerits and I could not prove that I had not done those things myself. Consequently, I am on probation for the rest of the time before Christmas. Didn't you get my note?"

"No. Did you write one?"

"I certainly did. That makes another queer thing."

"Perhaps you didn't address it correctly."

"I don't see how I could help it. I think I can get off next week Friday or Saturday, and will telephone to make sure. Will I have to write to Miss Randolph?"

"We are allowed calls on Saturday afternoon. Just send in your card to Miss Randolph, with my name, too. What time will you come?"

"About three o'clock."

"I shall be ready to see you at that time, then. Don't get any more demerits!"

"No, not if I can help it. I remember that the

ice carnival will be held again some day. May I speak to skate with you?"

"Does the best skater in the military school have any doubts as to that?"

"Meaning me?"

"Meaning you."

Somewhat consoled for his lack of prowess in skiing that afternoon, Donald determined to keep from demerits, as Betty had urged, to buy a new pair of skis, and to practice his more favorite diversion, the skating, that he might not lost first place in that.

CHAPTER XV

DONALD'S DISCOVERIES

ON the following Saturday, Donald Hilton called upon Betty at Greycliff. He had both written and telephoned and found that it would be "perfectly convenient" for Betty to receive him. Alma brought his card to Betty, who had just come down stairs, at the appointed hour, to wait in a small reception room. Several girls were there, according to custom at Greycliff, expecting callers. Cards were always first taken to Miss Randolph or whatever teacher was in charge for the afternoon.

Upon receiving Donald's card, Betty crossed the hall to the double parlors or reception rooms, in one of which Donald was waiting. At her approach he rose and held out a friendly hand. Betty was looking particularly fetching, though simply dressed for the afternoon. There were some other guests in the large room, but Donald led Betty to a comfortable seat in the corner at one end of the room, near one of the windows, and placed his own chair, a big affair with a high back, in such a way that he would

face Betty and the world would be shut off, so far as he was concerned.

"Now we can talk," said Donald. "You haven't any idea how aggravating it has been not to be able to get over here."

"What did you have to do while you were 'on props,' as we call it?"

"What didn't I? But being 'on props' chiefly cuts you off from privileges, you know. I didn't see the commandant again—thought I would not bother the old boy, and he had been pretty fine about it, anyhow. I did go to Van Horne and I told him all the details. I think he believed me. But none of the officers can say much if it is a case of breaking rules. And I could not prove anything. Consequently I went 'on props.' "

"Do they write home about it?"

"No, but I did, of course. I wrote the whole thing, more because I was afraid of what might come of it in the future than because I wanted them to know about it. I told them not to waste any sympathy on me, but they'd better get it straight from the first."

"It was a perfect shame!"

"A fellow has to take these things sometimes, and I do not need any sympathy. What made me so provoked was that I could not find out who set it all up. And now I come to the thrilling part of my tale of woe. You remember that we thought it might

be the younger cadets getting it back on us older fellows, but I was the only one so favored!

"I think that I told you once, Betty, about the little rivalry in our class, and the fellow that would scarcely speak to me because I made the first team and he didn't."

"Yes, but I have forgotten his name."

"Newt Fuller. He is a great follower of Captain Holley. Then there is another named Jim Clark that was friendly with me, until he began to go around with Newt and his friends, and roomed with one of them. I had noticed that they were not any too cordial, but didn't pay much attention. I treat all the boys alike, except to have an especial pal or two, as all of them do.

"Well, shortly after the reception, I noticed Jim's starting to say something to me two or three times, then looking all around and changing his mind. Finally, I asked him what was the matter, if he wanted to speak to me about something. We were separating after drill that time. 'Sh-sh!' he said. 'Yes, I do, but I can't tell you now. If I can get a chance, I'll tell you something one of these days. I don't dare now. But watch your step!'"

"Mercy sakes!" cried Betty. "Is anybody going to do anything very terrible to you?"

"No, indeed. Nothing very serious, I'm sure. Of course, my mind ran back to the cause of my being

on probation, and I began to connect that with Newt, because Jim was with that crowd."

"Then it wasn't the younger cadets at all?"

"No, not a bit of it. To go on with the story—old Jim would look awfully guilty whenever he saw me, and I remembered that he had looked funny before when he saw me, but I had not thought about it. As a conspirator, Jim is not a success!" Donald's half suppressed laugh here amused Betty, who laughed, too, and several girls and boys not far away looked over to see what the fun might be.

"Some of our friends will be joining us in a few moments," said Donald. "I'd better sober down, if I don't want to be interrupted. To continue, as the books say, finally, one time not long ago, Jim and I happened along together on the ice, probably out of sight of any of the other conspirators, for Jim skated up to me. We did a few figures, and Jim told me what by that time I was expecting, that it *was* set up. He was the one who sent the word that called me out of my room, and he and another cadet tore up the place a little, thought it was fun and nothing more than the boys sometimes do to each other. 'But, Donald,' he said, 'I did *not* put those cigarettes and ashes in your room. I heard Newt and the other boys talking about it afterwards, and knew that they must have been there after I left. I nearly gave the thing away when I saw you, walking up and down after the girls had arrived for the

reception.' And now, Betty, Jim said, 'I wanted to tell you, but the worst of it is that there is somebody in authority who suggested the whole thing. Can you guess? *Who didn't want you to be at that reception?*' " Donald paused.

"Who, indeed!" exclaimed Betty. "Why, such things are too small for a man to do! I can't believe it, even of our mysterious captain. But now I will tell you what he did that night. He must have done it on purpose. He took pains to see that I saw you outside. I thought perhaps it was an accident after all!"

"I think I would have lost what little mind I had left if I had known that you were looking at me!"

"I couldn't tell you that night, with all the rest you had to trouble you."

"I could scarcely believe Jim, and said, 'Are you *sure*, Jim?'—and he said, 'Indeed I am; you want to look out, Don.' So I'm looking out, and Jim doesn't look guilty any more when he sees me, for I told him it was all right. He was just in for some fun, but Newt, and whoever was behind him, intended to make trouble for me with the faculty. That much is plain. Jim will have to keep in with those fellows, so they won't suspect. He is a pretty decent chap, and I can see that he is disgusted with Newt!"

"I don't see the point of Captain Holley's dislike of you. He is not paying much attention to me."

"Twice, though, when he wanted you for his company, I got ahead of him."

"Yes, thank fortune!"

"I thank you, Miss Betty," and Donald started up, as if to rise, and bowed.

"I see. It is not letting another man take the girl you have asked for."

"That is partly it, but I am afraid that the captain is also interested in this particular girl."

"Donald, if he should ask me to call or anything, what should I do? If I have a previous date with you, it would only make him do something mean to you. I don't believe I'll go to the ice carnival at all."

"If he should ask to call, I think you would be safe to let him do it, even if you don't like him. I'm sure I can't advise you, for I hate to think of your having anything to do with him. Don't think of me. I can keep out of any more trouble, I think. Jim promised to warn me through one of the other boys if he knows of anything."

"When did Captain Holley come to the military school, or do you know?"

"The year before Louise came here, for a little while, you know. I always wondered why she didn't stay."

"There was some trouble, and the girls did not regret her going. She made herself disagreeable enough. But the poor girl had all kinds of trouble,

of course, for which she wasn't to blame. She tries to be more friendly now."

"When Holley tried to claim, one day in a group of us cadets, that his country didn't start the war, and isn't to blame and all that, I thought it was too funny to get mad about, and he kept saying that Americans ought to keep neutral—nothing to us, I suppose, how many of our people get killed at sea—but they have relatives over there, and maybe they really do think it. Our boys get pretty hot sometimes, and you ought to see how the drills have improved! Even the smallest of the kid cadets are getting ready to fight for their country! Holley claims that even if he had not been in the United States, the trouble with his eyes would have kept him out of the army."

"The girls talk, too, though Miss Randolph and the teachers try to keep them from having arguments or stirring up Professor Schafer and Doctor Carver. Isabel came rushing into our suite the other day, with her cheeks hot and her eyes flashing, and asked us what we thought of the idea that you would do anything, no matter how mean, for your country, 'your country right or wrong' stuff. 'Do you think *that's* patriotism?' she asked, about the way she does in debate. Cathalina told her that of course you would *love* your country and your flag, 'right or wrong,' but to 'justify' wrong acts of the people who were running the government certainly wouldn't be

true patriotism. She said that her mother said God's laws were first, and that our motto says 'In God we trust.' ”

“Oh, well,” said Donald, “in our country we don't hesitate to speak out and tell our politicians what we think. Our flag stands for certain principles—ideals, the old boy calls them, and it's those that we'll fight for if we get into the war. He made us a long speech the other day on patriotism, and took up all these puzzling things. He said that our flag stands for these great principles, and that sometimes there was a difference between our real government and its principles, and their administration by politicians that were not really patriots. I wish you had heard him. Such cheering and clapping! *He's* the kind of an old scout to put in charge of a military academy! It wouldn't be a very pleasant place to be in these days for anybody who wasn't a good American.”

“Good!” exclaimed Betty. “But I do think it is the funniest thing to hear you and Jack and the rest of the boys call the commandant the 'old boy' and 'old scout.' He is so big and dignified. I should think you'd be afraid of him.”

“We are. But what good would he be if he weren't strict? You don't know how much good military discipline does some of those wild boys that come to our school. Though it is true, Miss Betty, that one can have too much of a good thing!”

"As you have good reason to know?"

"Just so."

"There's one thing I hadn't thought of—I don't believe you would be prevented from an engagement again, do you? Seems to me it would look suspicious, the same thing another time."

"I think it could be done in some other way the next time."

"Then I shan't make any more dates."

"Oh, Betty! You wouldn't punish me that way, I hope."

"Will you look out when any of them are around, so nothing could happen?"

"Of course. I rather think I could take care of myself."

"See that you do, then," said Betty lightly. "By the way, how is your Glee Club coming on?"

"Practicing as usual. How is yours?"

"Practicing, too, every week. You would think we had nothing but a conservatory of music around here by the sounds, especially the last of the week. The Glee Club, the Guitar, Uke and Mandolin Club, the Collegiate and Academy Orchestras, to say nothing of what Hilary calls the Comb Symphony Orchestra, on private serenades, combine to make night hideous."

Donald was thinking "what a bright, jolly, sweet girl Betty is, and how those dimples do chase around when she laughs!" And Betty was thinking "Isn't

Donald a good, wholesome boy, honest and fine as they are made!"

Harry Mills and Jack Appleton were calling on Dorothy and Jane, and it came about that they all drifted together to chat, since Donald had completed his confidences to Betty.

CHAPTER XVI

CHIVALRY AND ARMS

THE annual ice carnival, full of excitement, came again and took its place in history. As Captain Holley was enduring an attack of tonsilitis, nothing marred the occasion for Betty, who again won the highest prize for fine skating. As this was Donald's unlucky year, according to him, he had twisted his ankle several weeks before and was not at his best. The first prize among the boys went to Jack Appleton, the second to Donald.

Both Jack Appleton and Harry Mills had this year developed a violent fancy for Eloise, who had her hands full to distribute her favors impartially, and not offend either the boys or their sisters. Harry Mills was her partner at the banquet which followed the carnival skating, but Jack claimed her most of the time on the ice. Eloise was almost equal to Betty on skates, and there had been some discussion among the judges about dividing the first prize, but it seemed best to award the second prize to Eloise. Betty had a few more extra performances to her credit.

The good-natured rivalry between Jack and Harry did not escape the comments of the girls, who pretended to deplore the fate of "poor Reginald." He was away, they said, and had no chance against his rivals.

"It is such a pity to spoil the lovely illusion about Reginald," said Eloise one day, as some of the girls stood in the hall, reading the letters just received, "but here is the last letter," and she tossed a letter into Betty's hands. "I was annoyed at first, then I thought that it would be fun to let you keep on thinking what you did. You thought from my manner that it was some boy I didn't like, didn't you?"

"I guess we did," replied Betty, reading the letter and laughing out when she came to the signature. But she made no remark, and handed the letter, a brief one this time, to Pauline, who was nearest. She rapidly read the page and exclaimed "A girl!"

"Ora Rand!" read Juliet aloud. "The romance of Reggie is o'er!"

"He's gone to the 'never been' shore," added Isabel.

"That masculine hand

"Of Miss Ora Rand," suggested Cathalina.

"Shall fool us poor Psyches no more," finished Lilian. "Tell us about her, Eloise."

"I did not want to write to her in the first place, because I am so busy, you know, that I can hardly keep up writing to two or three close friends whom

I don't want to give up. She is younger than I am, does not go around with us older girls and boys at home, and, I think, just wanted to keep up a correspondence because I was away at school and she thought it would be interesting. So it has been a little drag, that is all. But she is a good little thing, and I have answered her letters once in awhile. I am ashamed to be so mean, but you just can't spend so much time on letters. And that is 'Reginald'!"

"Now defunct," said Pauline. "*Requiescat in pace.*"

School life is a busy, exciting one, full of hard work for those who want success in it, but also full of fun and good times among the especially interesting folks that compose the school world. It is full of variety, and time flies swiftly on that account. Before the girls realized it, spring was again at hand. It was April, with its tantalizing days, in which the birds were migrating, nature was making a great effort to bloom into blossoms of tree and plant, the girls were hungering for the woods and shore, and yet in this more northern clime there were wet, muddy fields, chill winds, and occasional flurries of snow. The bird classes wore rubber boots, raincoats, and rubber hats or other more disreputable head covering which rain could not hurt. It was April of 1917, that spring when the echoes of heavy artillery in France were of more and more concern in our country.

One morning the newspapers were delivered earlier than usual. The delivery was usually made about the middle of the forenoon. This morning, as Isabel said later, "even Greycliff Village had speeded up," and the papers came out right after breakfast. In them was the never-to-be-forgotten message of the President. The teachers sat reading their papers at their desks when the first bell for class rang, and a few of the girls who took them came to class with copies in their hands. Faces were sober and some of them were beginning to take on that look of uplift which was characteristic of the time. Patricia West's class had gathered and were waiting when she put down her paper upon her desk, looked through and beyond the girls gathered before her, and stepped to the blackboard behind her. No outline of Latin constructions, or references for English study grew under her hands. The girls watched her while she wrote:

"In the beauty of the lilies, Christ was born beyond
the sea,
With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you
and me;
As He died to make men holy, let us die to make
men free!"

Silence for a moment, as the girls read and looked at each other and at "Patty." "Is it war, Miss

West?" asked one of the girls in the front row. Miss West picked up the paper. But as she began to explain, the chapel bell rang, to the surprise of all, the continuous ringing which was the signal for a general meeting.

"Pass out quietly, girls," directed Miss West; "go immediately to the chapel, and take your regular seats."

Lilian slipped her arm in Hilary's as they went in the chapel, and walked forward to their seats, which were side by side, in the junior collegiate section. No customary music from the organ greeted them, but most of the faculty were on the platform. A few of the professors who lived at the village, and had not yet come out for classes which were scheduled later in the day, were missing. There sat Doctor Carver, looking bored. Professor Schafer sat back in his chair, his arms folded, a grim look on his face. Doctor Norris was giving an encouraging smile to Patty, who was very white.

It was not long before the last class had entered and was seated, and members of the faculty ceased to enter the door on the platform. Then Miss Randolph rose and went forward to the desk. "Young ladies," said she, "I have called you together this morning because we are at a crisis in American history, and I want you to have a share in the first knowledge of facts, which you ought to know, and in which you will probably have a share.

"You have been studying the history of Greece, Rome, England, and other countries beside your own, and very properly. You have been studying American history, and some of you imagine that 'history' is all of the past. The pages that are being made every year are not less important. Professor Matthews will read to us all the remarkable message by the President of the United States which is in the morning paper. Not alone the words of the message have stirred us this morning, but what is before us—the inevitable duty.

"It might seem strange to some that I call you from your lessons and interrupt your work. But we try to teach more at Greycliff than the usual curriculum. We take an interest in the character of our girls. When I talked to you at the beginning of the year on 'Heroines' I had in mind the self-sacrifice and heroic meeting of difficulties that some of you may have to bear. I hope that they may not be too heavy, but I have confidence that my girls will not be found wanting. Professor Matthews."

After a brief chapel service, classes went on as usual the rest of the day. That evening the Grant Academy Glee Club was to give an entertainment at Greycliff, as many cadets outside of the club permitted to attend as desired to come and pay the small admission fee. Donald had told Betty not long before that he thought there was scarcely a cadet who would miss the opportunity to come to Greycliff,

and certainly no girl was planning to stay in her room to study on that night!

"Seems to me," said Isabel, "that we have all our excitement at once. This morning they tell us we are going to get into the war at last, and here come the prospective soldiers to our doors this evening!"

"Oh, not many of those boys will go!" exclaimed Virginia.

"I don't know about that. Of course the very young ones will not, but the older ones won't care whether they are through school or not. My, don't I wish I'd been a boy, too!"

"Isabel!"

"I'm going over to see what Betty and Cathalina are going to wear tonight."

"And, incidentally, what Hilary and Lilian are going to wear."

"No, they won't care what they wear, especially tonight, when all they're thinking about is what is going to happen to Campbell and Philip, and how soon. If I were only old enough, I'd go as a nurse when our boys go."

"You'd have to know something about nursing, too."

"Yes; I suppose I would."

"I don't believe we'd better think much about it yet. It will be some time before we are actually in it."

The girls in Lakeview Suite were dressing for

dinner and the concert when Isabel entered. Cathalina's cheeks were pink, and Betty's were a match for them, as they dressed, in what Isabel called their "spacious boudoir." Isabel perched on the bed and told the girls to back up to her if they wanted to be hooked up, or have any ribbons tied. "Will they let the boys sit by the girls if they want to?" she asked.

"Oh, yes," said Betty; "but they never let us have real invitations; we have to buy our own tickets, you know."

"I wondered," said Isabel. "I could not remember, but Poddy Brown asked me if I would be there and said he hoped to see me!"

"What a name!" exclaimed Cathalina. "Poddy!"

"Yes, isn't it? I asked him about it at the military reception, and he said it was a great compliment on the part of the boys—they call him 'Pod' because he never 'spills the beans'!"

Having brothers, neither Cathalina nor Betty had to have that expression explained. "I see," said Cathalina. "He's the boy with that serious face, isn't he?"

"Yes. He can tell you all kinds of jokes with the most sober face, but at the end he laughs like anybody else."

"Isabel," said Cathalina, "what do you think about the military school, do you think that it will be broken up right away?"

"Mercy, no," said Isabel. "Why, the old United States has to get ready, doesn't she? Jim said that 'when he got in it,' as he put it, even the regular army could not get off the first minute. Is Captain Van Horne's appointment under the regular army?"

"It can't be, because at home he did not want them to call him 'captain'; said it was only a courtesy title of the school."

"Only the commandant, Donald said," inserted Betty, "is a regular army officer, and as far as I know, he is retired. I am so anxious to hear what Donald has to say about the latest news."

"He sings, doesn't he?"

"Yes, but he wanted me to see him a moment before I go in the auditorium, at the head of the stairs, about ten or fifteen minutes before the program begins."

"There! How do I look, Isabel? Compliments are in order," and Cathalina whirled around to show Isabel her gown.

"You are as perfect as usual, and as pretty as a peach," responded Isabel at once.

"For that I'll hug you," said Cathalina, laying her hot cheek against Isabel's before she suited her action to her words. "You rather overdid the compliment, but it sounded well. See what a fever I have!"

"Your cheeks *are* hot, but we'll not send for the doctor yet. But I'll have to hurry, if I get dressed

before dinner myself. There will be enough time after dinner, though, won't there?"

"I don't think so," said Betty. "The cadets are going to have an early dinner and come right over, to have the program begin as soon after seven-thirty as possible."

"The announcement said eight o'clock."

"I know it, but there was a change. See if Miss Randolph does not announce it at dinner. She must have forgotten it at noon. I had a note from Donald this morning."

Evening came and brought almost the entire military academy to Greycliff, in various conveyances. They went immediately to the auditorium, the singers to a room near the chapel, whence divers tones and tunes soon floated out, as one or another tried his voice. Some of the young officers were counted among the members of the Glee Club, among them Captain Van Horne and Lieutenant Maxwell. Girls and cadets occupied the seats in the chapel, and filled it with the buzz of conversation while they waited. Captain Van Horne, with one eye on Donald, though not for the purposes of discipline, noted that he went out into the hall before the program, and followed his example, in the hope of seeing Cathalina. Both young men were rewarded with a short visit, as the girls stopped to shake hands and ask what they thought of the prospect. "This news of imminent war has stirred up the academy to the

boiling point," replied Captain Van Horne to Cathalina. "All sorts of crazy ideas are going the rounds, but the atmosphere is patriotic at any rate."

The conversation in the auditorium ceased as soon as the Glee Club cadets came on the platform. The younger cadets in the audience were as quiet as the girls, out of respect for them, and because they had been told that they would be asked to withdraw by their officers if they forgot and conversed with the girls during the musical numbers.

How the cadets sang, and how the girls applauded! Their schoolmates in the audience, also, ably assisted in the applause. Before the last number the commandant announced that another had been added to the program, "by Lieutenant Maxwell, with the Glee Club."

The last number printed was a rollicking sailor song, sung with much enjoyment apparently, while the audience felt like keeping time. Then, in great quiet, Lieutenant Maxwell stepped forward and began the "Battle Hymn of the Republic":

"Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the
Lord;
He is tramping out the vintage where the grapes of
wrath are stored."

Could it be the jolly, joking young lieutenant that all the girls enjoyed so much? The fine young face

was sober, and looked off into the night through the great windows. Perhaps he saw a little white cross in France. But he smiled as he sang the words Patty had written on the board that morning:

“As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free!”

CHAPTER XVII

EXCITING DAYS

THE young people of America had few illusions when war was declared in the spring of 1917. The war in Europe, with its hideous beginning and terrible progress, was more or less familiar in detail. It was no unknown adventure that our soldiers faced. Photographs or pen pictures of the trenches and their horrors had been public since that August of 1914. Ah, the gallant young Americans of 1917 and 1918! With smiles and jests, or with faces of deadly earnestness, our boys sang and marched, or rode toward the thing that had to be done. For a cause, and with a purpose, the youth of that generation offered themselves. We have had some sickening revelations since the war, but none that cast a shadow on the young generation that fought our battles then.

“Lord God of hosts, be with us yet—
Lest we forget—lest we forget!”

No other days of romance or chivalry ever gave

more of effort, courage, and the sacrifice of all the human heart holds dear than those days when America's heart was in France, and her eyes following a map with the advance of American forces.

Greycliff days went on as usual in the class-room, though war was declared and the reading of the morning paper became one of the exciting moments of the day. "When would the boys go?" was the question of chief importance. Some time after the Glee Club concert, Betty received a telephone message from Donald Hilton, asking if he could see her in the afternoon after classes, or in the evening before study hour. "It is very important," said he. "Will Miss Randolph permit me to call?"

"I'll find out, Donald, and let you know. I think she will."

Later Betty telephoned that Donald might come between dinner and study hours, and at the appointed time he arrived, having cut short his own meal to get to Greycliff in time, and being excused properly at the academy. He met Betty in the hall, and they stood talking there, while Alma took his card to Miss Randolph and returned with it for Betty.

Donald was full of repressed excitement. "I had to come to see you, Betty—before I take French leave of the school—in more senses than one!"

"What!" exclaimed Betty. "You're going to enlist now!"

"Yes," replied Donald, "I'm going."

"Do you mean without telling your folks?"

"Yes, without telling anybody but you."

Betty was touched by his confidence, but said earnestly, "Donald, don't you do it! Go home first and see your father and mother and sisters. You will regret it if you don't."

"If I tell them, they will try to keep me from going, or at least until the end of the school year. Of course Mother would not give her consent, anyway, even if Father were willing."

"I'm not so sure about that," said Betty. "And I think it would be dreadful to go without saying goodbye."

"Oh, I'd get off, probably, to say goodbye before I went to France."

"You don't know what might happen. Here is Alma. Thank you, Alma. Come on, Donald, to the bench at the end of the hall. We'll not be interrupted there. The girls will be singing and playing in the parlors."

Donald and Betty walked to the end of the corridor, past the reception rooms, to where a long, old-fashioned bench filled part of an alcove, by the large windows which looked out upon the wood.

"Now," said Betty, "tell me all about it."

"I have to go, that's all," said Donald grimly. "I

can't study. Nobody can at the academy. The commandant is as stirred up as anybody, though he tries not to show it. We heard that he is trying to get back in the regular army and go to France with the first troops. Van Horne is going, and Maxwell, as soon as they can. They are enlisting with the National Guard, and are only waiting to do it till they can arrange about the school. They don't want to leave the commandant in the lurch. But there will be precious few of the older boys left to teach, and school closes soon anyhow. They are going to hurry up the work and Commencement, they say now. Some of the boys say that the school will close, but nobody knows for sure. I'll not miss much."

"Donald," said Betty soberly, "I'd be the last one to say 'don't go,' but, honestly, I think that you might take time enough to write home about it. Because you boys are full of patriotism—that isn't going to get you to France any sooner. And until the camps get started, where could you get better military training than right here in a military school?"

"That is so, Betty, but perhaps some of us can help in the training, and we'd like to get into the real stuff!"

"I think that your mother will consent to your going, since you are so nearly of age, and perhaps she would not care about your finishing the school year, either. You see, my cousins from Canada are

in the war, and I know how my aunt feels. *Please* promise me to write to your mother!"

Donald changed position, looked thoughtfully at Betty, and smiled as he replied, "I think a good deal of your advice, but I must go."

"It will not hinder your going. And even if you do go later without the consent of your family, it will be different from not even having written!" Thus persuaded Betty.

"If I wait, may I have a picture of you, Betty, to take with me?"

Betty flushed a little as she replied, "Why, yes, you may, if you want one. If you come over again, I'll bring down what I have, big pictures and snapshots, and you can take your choice. You would want a small picture, wouldn't you?"

"I would," said Donald, patting his left hand pocket, while Betty blushed again. "All right, I'll wait and write to mother, and will you let me come over on Saturday afternoon to tell you the results? And perhaps you could have the pictures ready, too. Will that do?"

"Of course it will do. I'm so glad, Donald! It will be much better. Your mother will feel so much better about it."

"Someway, Betty, I don't feel in quite so much of a hurry to leave when I'm with you," said the frank Donald. "I'll have one more good Saturday after-

noon with you, and perhaps, if it is not stormy, we can have a boat ride. Can you get permission?"

"I'll ask. There are the girls, Donald; look out of the window."

Cathalina, Lilian and Hilary were passing, coming from the direction of the little wood on the hill, and waved their field glasses gayly as Betty tapped on the window.

"Did you say that Captain Van Horne is leaving soon? I wonder if Cathalina knows."

"He and Maxwell go as soon as possible. You see, they are right up in military drill and discipline, and will make valuable officers."

"Lilian and Cathalina haven't heard from Philip, and Hilary hasn't heard from Campbell for *days*, and they are sure that there is some reason—though both boys promised their parents that they would finish the school year and get their diplomas. You see, they graduate this year."

"Oh, graduate! What is school in comparison with this?"

While Donald and Betty talked, the three girls who had passed came down the hall, Cathalina with a telegram in her hand. "Do you suppose they'll care?" asked Lilian, thinking about how little she and Philip would want to be interrupted when time together was so short.

"Of course, they won't," said Cathalina, "for we'll not stay but a minute. Donald will be interested, I

think. Excuse me, people," she continued, as they joined Betty and Donald, "but I have just received a telegram from Philip, and Lilian has another one. Hilary had one from Campbell, too, and they are coming on to see us Saturday!"

The girls had all greeted Donald, Cathalina with a bow as she spoke, while Donald had risen and brought up a chair or two to face the bench.

"Some more folks going to war," remarked Donald.

"Yes, that must be it," assented Cathalina. "These telegrams are all from New York, and it is not vacation. I imagine that they have gotten permission to leave school and are going to enlist."

"I am sure of it," said Lilian. "Phil's last letter was chiefly a protest against his promise."

"Campbell wrote that he was released from his," said Hilary. "His mother said that ordinarily education was the most important thing for young people. But when a boy was of age and felt it his duty to go, he should not be bound by a promise."

"Some of us who are not of age want to go," said Donald, "and if you are interested, I'll tell you what a time we are having at the school." At Donald's urging, the girls sat down, while Donald related the latest news and hearsay at the academy, and Cathalina's rather sinking heart was encouraged when she learned that the young captain whom she admired so much was not leaving without time for a word of

farewell for her before he left. Would he come over to see her? was the question in her mind. The study bell rang while they talked, and all the girls walked along with Betty and Donald toward the entrance, leaving them there to make their adieux, while they went on up to Lakeview Suite.

It was not long before Betty joined the other girls and sat down in their midst, finding them with no idea of studying. Lilian was lying on the couch which made the window-seat. Hilary was sitting with both elbows on the study table, and Cathalina was in a rocking chair, facing her. "Look here, Betty," said Lilian, and as Betty went over toward her she held out her left hand, on which the diamond of her engagement ring sparkled. "Mother sent it to me. Wasn't it dear of her! It will make things easier when Philip comes. But it makes me sick about everything. We were going to have such a wonderful time this summer!" Lilian closed her eyes and put her hand over them. The ring flashed as it caught the light from the electric lamp on the table, but Hilary switched it off as she noticed Lilian, remarking that as nobody was going to study right away they would not need it.

"Cheer up, Lil," said Betty. "We don't know much of what is coming, I guess, but it doesn't help any to look ahead. Maybe some of the things won't happen at all."

"We were all going to the sea-shore together,"

said Cathalina, "but, of course, Father has been telling us that this was coming."

"Yes, it isn't as if we had not been thinking of it," said Hilary, "and I don't see how we can help anything by worrying. We've got to stand by the boys. Let's get to work at those lessons pretty soon."

"All right," said Lilian, jumping up. "Cathalina and I telegraphed right back to Philip, and Hilary to Campbell, so there's no need of letters. They'll be here almost before we could get one to them. By the way, Betty, there was a letter for you. We brought it up. It is on your side of the dresser. I forgot it. We stopped and got our mail, and there was this ring for me, so I promptly forgot everything else!"

Betty ran into the bed-room and, turning on the light there, sat down on the bed to read her letter. Then out she came, the letter in her hand. "More news," said she. "My brother's enlisted."

At that moment there was a rap, and Isabel came in, also holding a letter and looking somewhat disappointed. She began to laugh as soon as she was fairly settled, however, and began to tell the girls why. "Did you ever see such an old goose as I am!" she exclaimed. "Here I wrote to Jim, all excited, for fear the boys were going to France next week or something, and now that Jim has written they aren't I'm disappointed!"

"They aren't at a military school, are they?" asked Betty.

"No. Jim wrote that he and father had made too much of an effort to help the boys through school for them to miss the rest of the school year; so they will finish. And Jim said that according to the statements of the government, the draft was going to be just as honorable, since they can only equip and send over a certain number anyhow; so there was no use in getting stampeded and throwing away the education you might be getting. Listen to this: 'Don't worry, little sister. They are not going right over, because the government probably can't use them now and isn't ready to train them yet. But remember that we are as patriotic as anybody and when the time comes we'll all be there, and I hope to go, too.' Poor Jim, with a family on his hands. Father isn't a bit well since Christmas."

"We have just decided, Isabel, that we are going right on with our lessons as well as our limited brains will let us, keep steady, and hope that we can help the boys, and do whatever turns up. It's all so mixed up now, with things happening all the time."

"I think that is very sensible, Betty," replied Isabel. "I'm going back to begin now. But I couldn't resist telling you girls."

"You must let us tell you our news before you go," said Lilian, "and I want you to see my ring. Mother is going to let me wear it now."

"Oh, Lilian, are you really *engaged*?"

"I really am. It happened at Christmas, but Mother thought that she would prefer my not wearing a ring or announcing it generally. But I suppose she didn't have the heart to keep me from wearing it when Phil came home to enlist. She likes him so much, and he is really so irresistible!"

The girls smiled at that, and Cathalina said: "The ring came in the evening mail."

"My, but it is a beauty!" exclaimed Isabel, turning Lilian's little fist this way and that to catch the light of the flashing gem, for the darkness had come outside, and their lamp was again burning.

The eventful Saturday finally came. The girls had arranged a little picnic as the best way of getting away from the busy surroundings at Greycliff Hall. Hilary had thought of it, and suggested that they take the horses. "We have never had a picnic like that," said she, "and those prancing steeds need some exercise, anyway. Philip and Campbell ride beautifully, and, of course, Donald and Captain Van Horne do, too."

"Captain Van Horne!" exclaimed Cathalina. "Do you expect me to invite him to take me out?"

"No, of course not, but Donald can ask him if he wants to go and there isn't any doubt whom he would ask to go with him, is there?" Hilary looked at Cathalina with twinkling eyes.

"Oh!" said Cathalina.

Captain Van Horne came over himself to ask Cathalina. She telegraphed in time to Philip for both guests to bring "riding togs," and asked Miss Randolph if they might carry out the idea. Miss Randolph consented, appointed Patricia West and Dr. Norris as chaperones, and said that one of the grooms should accompany the party.

"She was just as interested," said Cathalina. "I believe that she wants to see Philip and Campbell!"

"Why shouldn't she?" asked Hilary and Lilian at once.

"We'd better have Prince and Pepper for the boys, don't you think?" continued Cathalina. "They have the most *style*."

"They are the prettiest horses we have," assented Lilian, "but I don't know that I'd call them *stylish*, exactly. But don't get Poky, whatever you do."

"We may have to take whatever they give us," said Hilary.

"Well, I'm going to see the riding master," said Cathalina, "and explain that we want the nicest horses they have."

"Donald and Captain Van Horne will bring their own horses, won't they?" asked Hilary.

"Oh, yes," replied Betty. "And Donald said that he and Captain Van Horne thought it would be better to take our dinner at Greycliff Village or wherever we are, instead of packing any lunch."

"I know that Phil and Campbell will prefer it," said Cathalina.

Some of the people at Greycliff Heights were much impressed by the arrival of what Hilary called, quoting from her Cæsar, "two youths of culture and valor," at Greycliff Inn. Philip had brought Louis along to look after everything. "My last trip with a valet," he told Lilian. "Louis and I are going to enlist together."

The train came in early Saturday morning, and the boys wasted no time after breakfast, but telephoned to Greycliff Hall and later took a taxi out there. Miss Randolph invited them to stay for lunch, and while the two young men rather disliked the idea of lunching with so many fair damsels, they accepted for the sake of Cathalina, Lilian and Hilary, who were not averse to having the girls see them. "I'm so proud of you," whispered Cathalina on one side of Philip, as they sat at Miss Randolph's table.

After lunch, the two guests went back to the village to get ready for the trip, and the groom took over the horses. It was a sunshiny, cloudless day, a fresh breeze blowing from the lake, the birds singing, the fields green, and the picnic party as happy as could be.

"I'm going to take the advice of the poet," said Philip, "and 'gather rosebuds while I may.' Let's have this day to remember, Lilian."

The rest were in the same mood. They followed the bridle path through the woods along the lake, toward Greycliff Village, then, by a little country road, took a gallop over the hills in another direction. The groom knew all the roads and directed them to the most attractive parts of the country. A great part of the time, the young people jogged along in pairs, saying part of the many things they had to say to each other in the time that seemed so short. In one lovely spot they all dismounted and strolled about, sat on logs or stumps, or picked the wild flowers, for nearly an hour. Hilary had swung her field glasses about her neck, and she and Campbell made up her list of spring birds, with many new ones.

Donald had, as usual, much to relate to Betty. He pinned violets on his "pansy girl," although she declared that flowers were not appropriate to a riding habit. "I'm surely glad that I took your advice, Betty," said he. "I would not have missed this picnic and ride for the world. And when Father and Mother and both the girls wrote me the fine letters they did, I was ashamed of thinking that I would go off without telling them. It is going to be all right. Father asked me, if I felt I could, to wait and see when the school would close, since I had told him that it might close earlier. He would very much like me to finish the year and get my credits and come home to see them. Then if I want to enlist, all right; and he said that he would not forbid my do-

ing it at any time. But it is only a little while to wait, so I'll do what they want me to."

"I'm so relieved," sighed Betty.

"On their account, I suppose," said Donald, pulling down his mouth at the corners, in pretended resignation.

"On my own, too," said Betty, laughing, and jumping up from the stump where they had been sitting, to run to her horse. "They are going. Didn't you hear Miss West's whistle blow? She has one of those referee whistles along."

"What kind of a whistle?" laughed Donald.

"One that the referees blow when we have basket ball or anything."

Philip had asked to be the host at Greycliff Inn, where the party had dinner. The village was enough of a country town to be able to furnish the finest of foods, if it lacked some of the city ideas. The inn was a new place, clean and quiet, with pleasant parlors, where they visited until called to dinner, ordered beforehand by Philip. Here the visiting was general. As Captain Van Horne and Dr. Norris were nearly of an age, Cathalina found herself drawn into conversation with them, and discussing, as she told the girls afterward, "things she didn't know anything about."

Then came the canter home in the twilight. Philip and Campbell were to stay over Sunday, leaving early Monday morning. Captain Van Horne was

leaving, with Lieutenant Maxwell, very shortly, but expected to visit Greycliff before that time. Captain Van Horne confirmed the rumor that the military school was to close earlier than the time noted in the catalogue. Donald announced to Betty that he was coming over to Greycliff every time he could get off until he left for home—with her permission.

“You have a standing invitation,” replied Betty, “and I think that Miss Randolph will be good to all our ‘departing heroes’!”

Lilian and Philip, though they had the best horses, lagged behind the rest, till Cathalina had to gallop back and tell them to hurry if they were to get in by the study bell, as directed. And just as they entered the grounds it rang.

CHAPTER XVIII

TO THE RESCUE

LIFE to some of the girls at Greycliff seemed "stale, flat and unprofitable" after Philip and Campbell, Captain Van Horne, Donald, and the rest of the boys and instructors at the military academy had gone. The school at Greycliff continued several weeks after the other school was closed. "I can think of nothing better for you," declared Miss Randolph in a chapel talk, "than to stay here and work while the nation and your homes are in this turmoil. I appreciate all the thoughts that call you homeward, but it will not be long before you can go. The prizes for excellence will soon be awarded, and we must make this Commencement worth while for those who have earned them." Indeed there was nothing else to do but to continue as nearly as possible in the ordinary school schedule. Old amusements began again to have their charm, especially in the beautiful environment of Greycliff. The outdoor sports engaged the girls in their free moments. As soon as the ice had gone out of the little river and the spring freshets were over, canoeing became a popular sport,

and the girls who had been together at camp during the previous summer were especially good in it. There was a new and larger boathouse this year, on the river, and more canoes than before were available.

One especially warm day, Cathalina and Hilary were having a talk. They were sitting where the rise of ground from the shore of the river jutted out a little over the stream, and a tree recently felled made a rustic seat. They had just come up from the beach through the wood, and seeing Isabel in a canoe, strolled down from the wood to watch her.

“Take off your cloak, Cathalina,” said Hilary, “and let this June sun dry your bathing suit. It feels fine. The water was cold, wasn’t it?”

“Yes, but that is not strange in this climate. We ought to go right in, according to rules.”

“The sun is hot enough, this afternoon, but we’ll go in a minute. Seems to me the river is a little rough.”

“They had some storms south and west of us, last night and this morning. I imagine Isabel is having a hard row of it upstream.”

“She is paddling, not rowing. There she has turned again.”

“Hilary, do you remember the first year we were here together?”

“Indeed I do, Cathalina. I had never been with anybody just like you, and I enjoyed it so much.”

"I didn't amount to much, I guess."

"Indeed you did. You had lots of grit to do so much that you were not accustomed to doing. I admired you very much, and do yet."

"You were the splendid girl that taught me so much," said Cathalina. "I hope that you are going to belong to our family. Campbell doesn't think of a girl but you."

"It isn't settled yet," said Hilary, which was more than she had said as yet to any one except Lilian. "I think so much of Campbell, but there is college and the war and everything, and, Cathalina, I couldn't be engaged to Campbell unless he asked me, could I?" Hilary's eyes were dancing now.

"What! The silly boy! He'd better make sure of you!"

"I'm sure he feels conscientious about the war. He said that he couldn't do what Phil is doing—not that he was criticizing Phil, you understand, Cathalina, because I know how much he thinks of him."

Cathalina nodded.

"I don't know whether I am ready myself, yet, either. But we just keep getting better and better acquainted and like to be together."

Cathalina shook her head. "That isn't very romantic, is it? Look at Isabel, Hilary! What is she doing?" Cathalina was standing on the edge of the elevation watching Isabel, who seemed to have caught her canoe in a snag or some obstruction near

the opposite side of the stream. Suddenly whatever it was gave way and the canoe shot out and over toward the other shore with a force that upset it.

“Isabel will get a plunge, too,” said Cathalina lightly, watching closely, however, till Isabel should come to the surface and strike out for the shore or the canoe. But Isabel when she came to the surface made no effort and sank again a little farther down stream. “Get a canoe, Hilary!” called Cathalina as she dived from the point in the hope of catching Isabel in time.

Hilary wasted not a minute, but bounded down the incline to the shore, and thrust out with one of the canoes that had, fortunately, been left there. As she paddled, she shouted, in the hope that some one might be near enough to hear her, though none of the men was in sight, and it seemed as if all the girls must be at the lake shore. “I wish I had a bigger boat to pick them up in,” thought Hilary, “but the canoe is faster. Oh, please, Lord, let me get there in time!”

Although the river was muddy, and the branch, or small tree in which Isabel’s canoe had caught must have been brought down quite recently, the current was not very strong, and that was in the girls’ favor. Cathalina, on coming up from her dive, caught sight of Isabel’s head only a little above her, but as she disappeared at once, she dived to get her and caught her. Not for nothing had Cathalina

watched the life-saving tests at camp. She had tried the "bringing in" of a supposedly drowning girl, but this was different, and the bank looked a long way off. But by this time, water was a familiar element, and she felt that she could keep them both up for a little while. Supporting Isabel's head, she waited for help, trying to direct their way toward the shore as much as she could, but carried further down by the current.

Hilary knew that Cathalina's endurance was not equal to her courage, and paddled her best to make up for the time lost in getting started. Several times she lost sight of the girls, and fear struck her heart. But they had only drifted around a curve, and Cathalina had managed to get out of the current and nearer the shore. But the stream was deep at that point, and Cathalina's strength only sufficient to keep afloat. It seemed ages till she heard Hilary's encouraging voice. "Here I am, now steady and careful, so the canoe won't go over!"

Cathalina grasped the side of the canoe, while Hilary tried to balance it, but the pull on Cathalina's side was too much. Hilary found herself in the water, added to the number of "casualties," with only that fact that Hilary was a strong swimmer, and that the shore was not far away, in their favor. The canoe had slipped from Cathalina's stiff fingers, though she still kept Isabel above the water. But just as she was about to give up hope, Hilary

reached her and took Isabel, and a rowboat rounded the curve, with Mickey pulling furiously.

“Take Cathalina in first,” sputtered Hilary, “and I’ll help you get Isabel in.”

Mickey helped the dripping Cathalina over the side of the rowboat, and with Hilary’s assistance drew Isabel up and over, putting her in the bottom of the boat with her head on Cathalina’s lap. Then Hilary scrambled in, and Mickey made haste to shore. By this time, they were where the river widened, just before emptying into the lake, and the shore was sandy. Mickey laid Isabel on the beach and began to work over her. Hilary helped, but told Cathalina to stretch out on the sand before she tried to climb the hill to the Hall.

“Go on, now, Miss Hilary,” said Mickey, “and have them get things ready at the hospital. She’s breathing and the water’s out of her. I’ll have her there in a jiffy.” But two or three of the girls from the lake shore who were half way up the hill already, got Hilary’s word and sped more quickly than the tired Hilary to have the nurse at the little hospital annex ready to receive her patient. Cathalina, also, rose and dragged herself up the hill, after Hilary and Mickey, who had Isabel gathered in his strong arms, and wasted no time in climbing the ascent and hurrying across the campus.

The word went round. “Isabel Hunt’s drowned,

and Cathalina Van Buskirk and Hilary Lancaster, too, they say."

This was repeated outside of Isabel's suite to Olivia, who was about to enter. Two girls had just come in, and were passing through the hall.

"No, they aren't, either," said one. "I saw them going into the pest house, but Cathalina could scarcely drag herself there. Mickey was carrying Isabel, and told us to 'clear out'!" The girl giggled, in spite of the serious occasion. Olivia burst into the room with the news.

"Isabel drowned!" exclaimed Virginia. "Why, she is one of the best swimmers here! Didn't she win a swimming meet at camp last summer?" Virgie had jumped up and her book had fallen to the floor. "I'm going right over. Why, we just *came* from there! We were all canoeing, and Isabel said she wanted to stay out a little while longer, and Mickey was right in the boathouse at the landing, working on a canoe." As she talked, she was twisting up her hair, which she had been drying, and ran to the closet for dress-skirt and middy. "Why didn't I dress when I came in!"

"Here, let me help you," said Olivia. "You're hands are all shaking, and you are trembling all over! I don't believe Isabel is drowned, but we'll go and find out." Olivia might have hung up the kimono which she took from Virginia, but she threw it on the floor, and while Virginia fastened one gar-

ment, had the other ready to go over her head. "Where's Avalon? Was she with Isabel?"

"I don't know where Avalon is. She may be drowned, too, for all I know."

"Cheer up. Remember your name's Hope, as Isabel says."

"How in the world did Cathalina and Hilary get there?" continued Virgie, thinking aloud. "They were at the shore, and would go right in after bathing."

"Gracious, Virgie—I don't know. All I know is what the girls said just now. I don't see why Mickey should be in such a hurry and be so cross if it were too late to do anything."

The two girls ran down the back stairs to the door where Betty had seen Donald's mirrored countenance on that famous Hallowe'en, and crossed the campus a short distance to the "pest house," or hospital annex. A group of girls had just left, walking away in an opposite direction, but as Olivia and Virginia neared the door, it opened and Hilary came out, wrapped in a big grey blanket. She was bound for the same door of Greycliff Hall from which Olivia and Virginia had come, and had on some big felt slippers and a few garments furnished by the nurse, in place of her wet sandals and bathing suit. She smiled rather wanly at the excited girls, and Virginia asked at once, "Is it true that Isabel was drowned?"

"No, indeed! But she came pretty near it."

“How did it happen? Tell us about it?”

“Wait till I get upstairs, if you don’t mind. I feel funny, too, from some medicine they gave me, but Miss Randolph said I could go to bed in the suite. She said that she was glad Cathalina and I broke the rules for once.”

“What rules?—Oh, well, I won’t ask any more questions till you get to bed. Did you rescue Isabel?”

Olivia began to laugh. “Aren’t you perfectly killing, Virginia Hope! Just said you wouldn’t ask questions and ask her another in the same breath! Come on, Hilary, I’ll help you upstairs.” But Hilary, gathering her blanket around her, was climbing the back stairs without any assistance, laughing, too, at Virginia.

“I don’t blame you, Virgie. I wouldn’t let you come with me if there were any chance of your seeing Isabel. She is feeling pretty sick right now, and a doctor is going to come and look her over. They put Cathalina to bed, too. She was the one who rescued Isabel. She would have been gone if it hadn’t been for Cathalina. She was standing on the edge of the bank and dived to get her.” Hilary went up a few more steps and then remembered another of Virginia’s questions. “Oh, yes, about breaking rules. It was so warm, you know, that we took our time about getting up to the Hall, and decided we’d go through the wood to get to the side

door. Then we saw Isabel, and I threw off my cloak and sat in the sun on that tree Mickey cut down—and, of course, it was breaking rules to wait, but we did not think of it then. As I told Miss Randolph, we were 'just stopping a minute' on the way. We didn't see Mickey at all, but he was in the boathouse and started right after us. I was in a canoe, you know, by that time."

"No, we didn't know. I suppose when Cathalina dived, you ran for a boat."

"That was it."

"Two more 'heroines,'" remarked Olivia.

"Only one," said Hilary. "Cathalina kept Isabel up till I got there, and then the canoe upset! I think I could have taken Isabel to shore, but it would have taken so much longer."

Betty and Lilian were at home when the girls reached the suite, and had not heard a word of the whole matter. They brought Hilary's own pretty gown, opened the bed and tucked her in "her downy cot," as Lilian said.

"My, doesn't bed feel good?" said Hilary. "I'd be all right if I hadn't swallowed a lot of that river water, and they gave me something hot at the pest house that made my head swim. Why, I've paddled *miles*, and—swim, swam, swum a long time without its hurting me. I was in the water this time only a few minutes."

"But it was the strain of the danger, I imagine,

and Isabel so near drowning, that made you feel so used up," suggested Lilian.

"Miss Randolph told me to go to bed and stay there," laughed Hilary, "and she would order a good dinner sent up to me. I wasn't to worry about either Cathalina or Isabel. Cathalina is just tired out."

"Why couldn't Isabel swim?" asked Virginia, for the account had been confusing as it was repeated to Betty and Lilian.

"She must have been hurt in some way getting loose from that branch or log, whatever it was."

"Maybe she just fainted," suggested Olivia.

"*Isabel* faint!" exclaimed Virgie. "I don't know, though; she said she was dizzy this morning. Perhaps she's coming down with something."

"We were all *going* down for a while," assented Hilary, with a smile.

"Nothing serious the matter with Hilary, Lilian—she can joke still."

"But you girls will find out how Isabel is before long and let me know, won't you?" begged Hilary. "Excuse me now; I'm going to sleep. I'm glad to get rid of the hot grey blanket that I had to wear, to cover deficiencies in wardrobe."

Hilary impolitely turned her back upon the girls, while Lilian drew the sheet and light blanket about her shoulders, pulled down the shade part way, and tiptoed out, propping the door ajar that the June

breeze might pass through. Then she took a book and sat down in the study to keep guard.

Betty and Virginia had gone right out. "I'm going straight to Miss Randolph," said Betty. "Cathalina is my room-mate, and she will think it's all right for me to inquire."

"So is Isabel mine," said Virginia. "Do you suppose she has come back from the hospital?"

"I should think so, unless there is something wrong with Isabel. The nurse will telephone everything."

As the girls approached Miss Randolph's door, with that guilty feeling of intrusion which attacked them under such circumstances, Mickey came out, having been called in to be questioned. His face was red, but he was smiling.

"Oh, Mickey—you can tell us better than anybody how Isabel really is and all about it."

"There isn't much," replied Mickey. "Oi wuz worrkin' in the boathouse an' the gurrls wuz all leavin' the river. After I didn't hear 'em no more, I looks out an' I sees the wan gurrl in the canoe, an' I starrted around the buildin' fur wan o' me tools I'd left out there. Thin I hurrd a yell an' there was Miss Hilary beatin' it down the river in a canoe and the little one was nowhere to be seen. So I gets out a rowboat and starts after 'em. All of 'em wuz in the water when I got there."

After hearing Mickey's account, Betty and Vir-

ginia decided not to bother Miss Randolph, and in an hour or so Cathalina came over, quite refreshed, finding Hilary up and demanding to go down to dinner. Betty ran to ask Miss Randolph, who consented. Cathalina reported that Isabel was "nearly all right," and that it was as they thought—she had gotten hurt when she pushed away from the branches of the log. "The doctor was there and said that there was nothing wrong. Isabel says that it is to make up for her not being in the wreck last year—she has to be known to fame in some way!"

"Isn't that just like Isabel?" said Betty.

There were only a few days more of school. Many plans had been changed in regard to public events. There was no lawn fete, and the Glee Club concert had been more like an ordinary recital at the Hall, with only a few visitors from Greycliff Village. But the girls adjusted themselves to the new conditions and made ready for the summer vacation with all its interests, chief of which was to get home to mothers and fathers who were seeing their boys off to various camps, or expecting them to leave as soon as called.

Virginia, as she had hoped, won second place as debater, the highest honors going to Isabel. Thanks to one of the wealthy trustees, this was a comfortable little sum of money for each of them. Virginia also won a collegiate scholarship and was leaving with the happy feeling that not only were her bills

all paid, but there was a good chance of her returning for another year at Greycliff. "Any one who makes as good candy as you do," Isabel solemnly told her one day, "will always be welcome at Greycliff!"

Isabel was to pay a visit to Cathalina in the summer and claimed to be "in ecstasies at the thought." She had put her arms around Cathalina's neck and held her close the first time she saw Cathalina after the accident.

"To think you went right in after me!"

"Nonsense," said Cathalina, embarrassed. "Of course I would."

THE END



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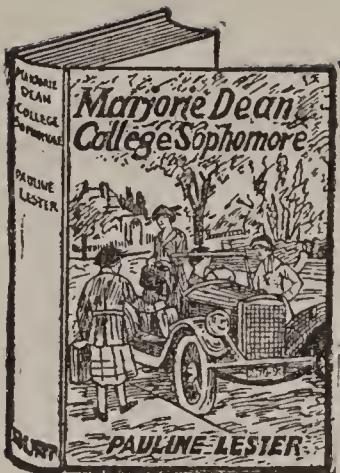
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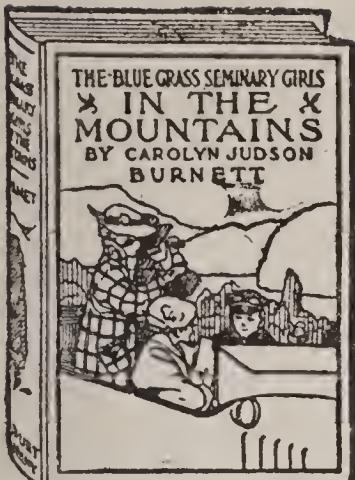
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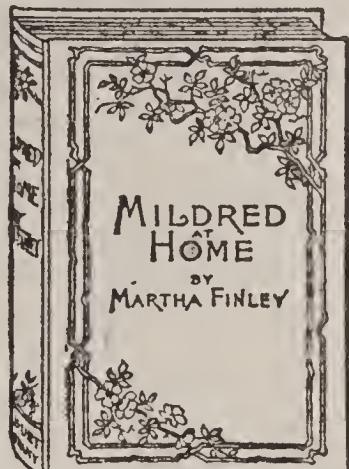
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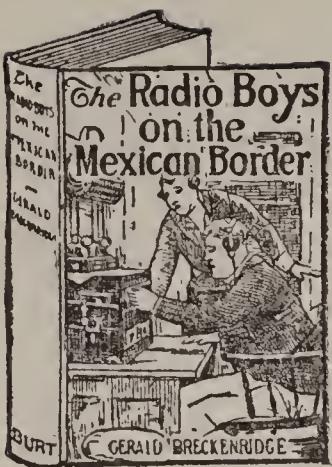
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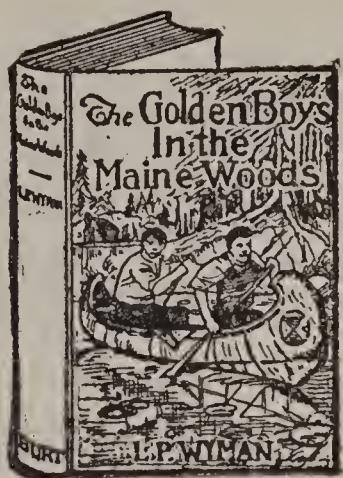
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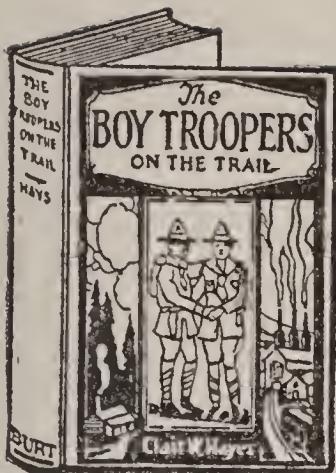
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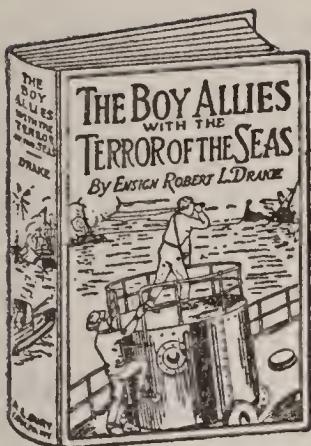
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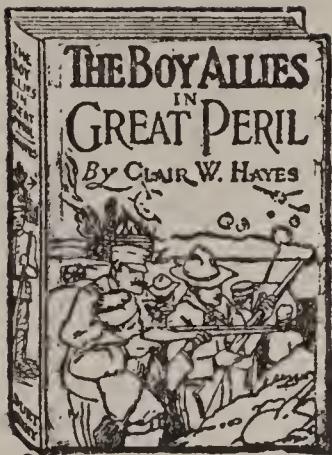
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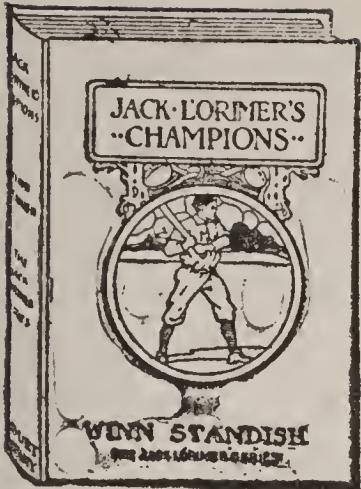
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